Today's
The Herald-Palladium
included inside

Lakeshore hires Buchanan's Frey as new head football coach
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Dowagiac News

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Cassopolis nonprofit hosts MLK Day events

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — A local organization celebrated the life and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. by engaging the community Monday.

Cassopolis-based nonprofit organization League for Encouraging Empowerment hosted its 27th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration events. LEE provided breakfast for residents of Stone Lake Woods and Manor Apartments in Cassopolis. Volunteers helped prepare, pack and deliver the meals.

After providing breakfast, LEE hosted a community breakfast at the Church of Casssopolis before its annual march from the US Post Office to the Historic Courthouse parking lot.

Photo provided

The League for Encouraging Empowerment hosted its 27th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration events Monday in downtown Cassopolis.

Founded in 2017, LEE is dedicated to empowering the youth of Cassopolis and surrounding cities to achieve their full potential by offering outreach and educational programs that remove barriers, build strong character, and teach essential life skills.

DOWAGIAC MIDDLE SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

DOWAGIAC — Dowagiac Union High School recently released its honor roll for its second marking period. Students who achieved a 4.0 GPA are noted with an . High Honors are students that achieved a 3.4 to 4.0 GPA. Honors are students who achieved a 3.0 to 3.39 GPA.

6th Grade
High Honors

Barnes, Camille; Carpenter, Paisley; Cortez, Uriel; DiStefano, David; DiStefano, Leonardo; Farver, Payten; Franklin, Stella; Grabemeyer, Olivia; Hackett, Hailey; Hatchew, Shail'ah; Hemenway, Sophia; Lindzy, Taylor; Manzano-Lorenzo, Adan; Martin, Rhylee; Medrano, Natalie; Mohr, Jordyn; Pavia-Morales, Uriel; Poole, Adonis; Rohdy, Jackson; Rudlaff, Elisabeth; Siegel, Brennan; Staley, Isabel; Sweet, Skylynn; Walker, Danica; Winters, Ariana; Alsup, Jackson; Anderson, Payton; Ausra, Tate; Baez, Norah; Bennett, Za'Kyrah; Bridges, Hayden; Caldwell, Lyla-May; Covell, Graice; Engen, Alaric; Gantt, Cash; Gasca, Maria; Gillesby, Ava Claire; Hall, Abel Wayne; Hammond, Ella Gene; Irvin, Adonis Orion; Keller, Brody Roy; Lindzy, Skylar June; Lock, Zane Allen; Manriquez, Oswaldo; McQueary, Broley; Mendoza, Cristian; Mendoza, Samantha; Mihm, Emily; Mireles, Luka; Mitchell, Loki; Nawrocki, Harlow; Nickens, La'Jerionn; Phillips, Penelope; Race, Bronson; Rankin, Zuri; Razo, Mia; Ridenour, Travis; Runyon, Jayla; Salinas, Hailie; Samuel, Aiden; Sandberg, Liam; Shaer, Emma Morgan; Shelton, Zariel Dominick; Slates, Jacob Dale; Suasto, Evan Michael; Trejo-Prudencio, Melani; Trowbridge, Cristina; Valencia, Jezabell; Weiser, Marshal

Honors

Blanco, Reyna; Contreras, Rogelio; Daly, Lukas; Franklin, Aiden; Goff, Travis; Grady-Garcia, Olivia; Hatfield, Arianna; Johnson, Easton; Kiggins, Wyatt; Marshall, Nolan; Martinez-Murray, Eladio; Mitchell, Eben; Moya, Dulce; Reeves, Taliyah; Slabaugh, Elizabeth; Sullivan, Arianna; Vincent, Ja'Vayah; Zavaleta Cruz, Alexis

7th Grade
High Honors

Leighton, Stella; Mroczek, Brielle; Phillips, Payton; Price, Mckenzie; Steenbeke, Madeline; Adams-Tinch, Lacey; Bennett, Nevin; Benson, Kane; Bressler, Chase; Brito, Natalie; Carr, Lake; Chapman, Sadie; Chapman, Taylor; Cooper, Rowan; Costa, Natilie; Dodd, Rogan; Hemenway, Noah; Higdon, Taylor; Justice, Emery; Keene, Clayton; Killarney, Owen; Laylin, Kenley; Nearpass, Nolan; Olmedo, Oliver; Orvis, Robert; Poorman, Nyree; Roach, Sophia; Sanders, Landon; Schau, Kellen; Schultz, Jade; Seals, Keeler; Siegl, Lillian; Sisk, Alexander; Snay, Journey; Spivey, Jocelyn; Tucker, Channing; Vargas, Ramon; Vazquez, Layla; Veloz, Mario; Washington, London; Watson, Madison; Wilson, Audrianna; Woodruff, Olivia

Honors

Beard, Peyton; Bogard, Natalie; Brog, Madeline; Brown, Alivia; Cheshire, Harley; Clark, Paul; Crandall, Abigail; Diaz-Irvin, Levi; Dutoi, Matalyn; Gibson, Alice; Hatchew, Mason; Hernandez, Aylin; Hoenes, Colton; Horton-Harris, Kamarah; Irvin, Maximus; Jones, A'mir; Kiggins, Emily; Lozada, Landon; Luthringer, Sylis; Lynch, Madison; Mack, Khariell; Marquez, Jose; Orozco, Daniel; Pompey, Graciana; Purucker, Bailey; Salazar, Jaylen; Sandoval, David; Zink, Emma

8th Grade
High Honors

Ausra, Zoey; Mohr, MaKenna; Samuel, Scarlett; Vazquez, Austin; Alsup, Hunter; Bacon, Cymone; Barnes, Winny; Breland, Bailey; Doyle, Leia; Earley, Don'Trell; Foster, Ryleigh; Hemminger, Payton; Holland, Aurora; Lyons, Avery; Marshall, Aryanna; Meyer, Addyson; O'Konski, Hunter; Pye, Aaron; Schaus, MiKayla; Scherer, Alec; Shepardson, Dylan; Snay, Kayliana; Taggart, Lukas; Tibbs, Zackary; Vargas, Lucero; Wilson, Zadreion; Winchester, Mackenzie ; Younger, Ava; Zavaleta-Cruz, Giselle

Honors

Boling, Ashton; Clark, Brenna; Craft, Jacon; Cristobal, Jonnah; Davis, Amira; Emerson, Maddy; Ferrier, Drew; Griffey, Jordan; Hartman, Eli; Herrera, Alejandro; Johnson, Jordan; Keene, Easton; Lopez, Joel; Manriquez-Mandujano, Julian; McIntyre, Christian; Miller, Mckenzie; Moreno, Emma; Pavia-Morales, Alondra; Phillips, Dustin; Phillips, Lanie; Planck, Izzy; Riddick, Nevaeh; Ruff, Thomas; Schaus, McKenzie; White, Myah

– Submitted

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

From left: Kyle Lott, Patrick Bakeman, Julie Schoff, Kris Soenen.

Relocation celebration

Schoff Solutions reopens with ribbon-tying ceremony

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — A local business' relocation was celebrated by the community Wednesday afternoon.

Schoff Solutions, 210 W. Division St., Dowagiac, celebrated its relocation with a ribbon-tying ceremony presented by the Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce.

Several chamber and community members were on hand for the celebrations, including Dowagiac Mayor Patrick Bakeman. Instead of a traditional ribbon cutting ceremony, the chamber uses a ribbon tying ceremony to signify the businesses and the community coming together as one.

"These ribbons, they all can mean a different thing and I look up at your picture up there, and I'm looking at these trees," Bakeman said. "Each one of them is a single tree, but they're all they're all needed to make a forest and they all need the same things to grow just like all of our businesses need each other to grow. We welcome you and we look forward to all the great things you're going to do and the strong business you're going to have downtown."

The celebration was a welcome one for Julie Schoff, an enrolled agent, accountant and QuickBooks ProAdvisor with more than 22 years of tax preparation experience. Formerly located at 103 Commercial St., Schoff said her new building allows her to expand her team while also boosting her clients' experience.

"I knew that once I wanted to start my own business, I wanted to come home to Dowagiac," Schoff said. "This is where I want to be, so I'm so excited to be able to be in this new location to be able to serve more of our community. I want to be able to help our local businesses be able to achieve their dreams."

Pokagon Band calls for retirement of Native-themed mascots, nicknames

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians is asking school districts and sports teams to retire their Native-themed mascots, nicknames and imagery.

The Pokagon Band's Representation and Outreach Board released a statement Wednesday night calling for the immediate retirement of all Native American mascots, imagery and nicknames by schools and sports teams at every level.

"Our position is clear and unwavering; the Pokagon Band is formally opposed to the use of such imagery," the statement said. "The use of Native American-themed mascots and names is a harmful practice that perpetuates damaging stereotypes and create hostile and unsafe learning environments for Native and non-native youth alike, undermining their self-esteem and emotional well-being. Schools should be places that provide all students with a safe, supportive, and respectful educational experience – not environments that memorialize the exploitation, violence, and genocide of Native people.

"Our tribal resolutions condemning this practice and our years of work with school boards, administrators and community members to move toward this shared vision demonstrate our dedication to the wellbeing of all youth in our community," the statement continued. "We are prepared to be a resource for schools and communities seeking a greater understanding of our culture and we stand in solidarity with all who are working toward this necessary change."

In 2022, the Native American Heritage Fund announced funding to four Michigan school districts to assist with

See **POKAGON**, page A3

Today's obituaries • Page A3

Annette Addai, Wesley Clayton, Ronald Deyarmon, Koral England, Kari Kasprzak, Danny Kauffman, Jewell Kelso, Albert Leak, Deanna Mohr, Paul Peterson Sr., Thomas Shultz, Phillip Sutton, Margaret Warren, John Zablocki

Inside today's Herald-Palladium

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FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly?
It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Punching your allies in the face does not make the U.S. stronger. Go build your hotels somewhere else.

■ I am sick of the daily lunacy coming from this White House. What is happening in Minnesota is soon coming to a state near you.

■ I'm not from Dowagiac nor do I know Mayor Bakeman, but man it's nice to see some youth finally getting involved. Good luck young man and say "heck no" to data centers.

■ There is no place for racism of any kind in our community. Kids learn from their parents.

■ The Study is an amazing place in our community. I can't remember when I had so much fun.

■ The Hunter Ice Festival was a huge success. So much fun for the family. It's a great tradition and I am always amazed at the artwork.

■ At some point I believe U.S. 12 needs to be converted to four lanes for those of us not traveling at 80 MPH because we hit the snooze button five times in the morning.

■ No more probation for drug dealers and drug buyers. They are better off getting the help they need while incarcerated.

■ Frankly, I've just listened to President Trump's speech given to world leaders at Davos, Switzerland. I have NEVER heard such an inflammatory speech. He is inviting war!

WEATHER

Saturday: A 40 percent chance of snow, mainly after 1pm. Mostly cloudy and cold, with a high near 8. Southeast wind around 5 mph.

Saturday Night: Snow likely. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 4. Chance of precipitation is 60%. New snow accumulation of around an inch.

SMC adds five programs

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

Trustee Todd Obren presented Nursing Department Chair Rona Goodrich of Paw Paw with her 10-year service pin. Photo provided

DOWAGIAC — At its regular meeting on Jan. 14, the Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees approved five new programs.

They include: a one-year certificate in criminal justice; an associate degree in respiratory therapy; a certificate in dental assisting, which will have a home on the upper floor of the Dale A. Lyons Building; a credential in child development associate; and a certificate in practical nursing.

Dr. Melissa Kennedy, dean of the School of Nursing and Health Services, said, "My goal is that students can have a credential, sit for a licensing exam and make a living wage no matter where they end our nursing program. This is the final phase. We already implemented Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for when they finish the first semester. This is the next step, for anyone who completes the first and second semester. They can take a seven-week pediatrics and mother/baby course and be eligible to sit for LPN licensing.

"Most Licensed Practical Nurses work in long-term care. We stopped offering it as a stand-alone program because there were not many jobs at the time, but with the growing nursing shortage, LPNs are coming back into hospitals and doctors' offices, while still being the primary providers in long-term care facilities. LPNs can get work experience, then come in third semester for two semesters and move forward" to RN, Kennedy said.

In his president's report, Brent Brewer said, "The Flywheel Effect is in full swing at SMC," referring to a business concept popularized by Jim Collins, describing how sustained momentum builds from consistent, small wins, creating compounding returns and accelerating results over time.

"With a week of registration remaining, as of Monday, we are 151 students ahead of where we were at this time last year, which is 8.5 percent up in head count and 7.6 percent up in contact hours. Housing for spring is at 94 percent of occupancy, compared to 89 percent last year."

"Intercollegiate athletics has certainly played a role," Brewer said, "but the story is bigger than any single factor, the result of many deliberate pushes working together. High-quality online courses designed by our faculty and aligned with strong student demand. Growing dual enrollment participation – we are over 600 for the first time in many years. Improved retention. Technology that truly supports our learners. And more in-demand programs like the ones Dean Kennedy talked about. However, this is a marathon, not a sprint, and we must keep pushing."

Trustee Todd Obren presented Nursing Department Chair Rona Goodrich of Paw Paw with her 10-year service pin.

"Rona's been a nurse for 33 years," Dean Kennedy said. "She's worked across a variety of practice settings throughout her career, including medical surgical nursing, home care, pediatrics, rehabilitation, long-term care, as well as nursing management and director-level roles. Her true passion, however, is teaching. She's been a member of the SMC community since 2015."

Goodrich is married and has two children, 19 and 24, who attend Western Michigan University.

Trustees acknowledged 24 gifts to the SMC Foundation totaling $18,846 and also accepted five donations to the college amounting to $5,516.

Pokagon Band announces community investment contributions for 2026

SUBMITTED

Photo provided

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana announced Thursday that it presented checks totaling $335,000 to 11 organizations at a ceremony at Four Winds South Bend's Ribbon Town Conference and Event Center.

SOUTH BEND — The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana announced Thursday that it presented checks totaling $335,000 to 11 organizations at a ceremony at Four Winds South Bend's Ribbon Town Conference and Event Center.

Local organizations that received contributions include (in alphabetical order):

■ Beacon Children's Hospital received $50,000 to support medical care for children

■ Bodwéwadmimwen Ethë ték, Inc. received $50,000 for Potawatomi language preservation programs

■ The Kwek Society received $20,000 to supply period products to Indigenous students and communities across North America

"South Bend is home to hundreds of Pokagon Citizens and also hundreds of our Four Winds Casinos employees," said Matthew Wesaw, Tribal Council Chairman of the Pokagon Band. "Ensuring access to specialized services and programs not only improves the quality of life for those in need, but it also makes South Bend a better place to live for everyone. The Pokagon Band is proud to continue our long-standing tradition of making meaningful contributions to important organizations that do so much to support the varied and diverse needs of the residents in South Bend and the region."

"As one of the largest employers in the region, the Pokagon Band's Four Winds Casinos plays an important role in supporting the local economy," added Mary Smith, President and CEO of Four Winds Casinos. "We are extremely pleased to take that contribution a step further by making charitable donations to these important organizations that support the personal needs of so many."

In addition to these contributions, the Pokagon Band and its Four Winds Casinos actively support the South Bend community through a variety of donations and causes. Last month, the Pokagon Band and its Four Winds Casinos donated $100,000 using the proceeds from the 2025 Four Winds Invitational to Beacon Children's Hospital. The Pokagon Band has donated close to $1.2 million to Beacon over the last fourteen years using the proceeds from the tournament.

In addition, the Pokagon Band has also funded major community development initiatives within South Bend including $2,225,000 for the renovation of Howard Park and $500,000 to Beacon Children's Hospital for the renovation and modernization of the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Several other large contributions have been made to support several non-profits which serve the South Bend community.

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Trump says Board of Peace withdrawing its invite to Canada's Carney

By DEREK WALLBANK
Bloomberg News (TNS)

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said that his new Board of Peace was withdrawing Canada's invitation to join, days after Prime Minister Mark Carney issued a withering speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos warning against coercive tactics by the world's great powers.

"Dear Prime Minister Carney: Please let this Letter serve to represent that the Board of Peace is withdrawing its invitation to you regarding Canada's joining, what will be, the most prestigious Board of Leaders ever assembled, at any time. Thank you for your attention to this matter!" Trump wrote in a social media post published as he flew back to the U.S. from Switzerland.

The missive was a sharp reversal from last week, when Carney accepted an offer from Trump to join the board.

At the time, he had just concluded a high-profile visit to China, where he met with President Xi Jinping and struck a deal to lower trade barriers between their two nations.

The agreement was part of Canada's east-west trade strategy to diversify trade lines in the face of what has been a year of north-south supply chain unrest between Canada and the U.S. – driven largely by Trump's own tariff and trade declarations.

Earlier this week, however, Carney made headlines for a speech at the World Economic Forum in which he warned so-called middle powers to band together to resist intimidation by the world's great powers. Although the speech didn't mention Trump by name, Carney took aim at several of his foreign policies, such a using "tariffs as leverage, financial infrastructure as coercion, supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited."

"Stop invoking the 'rules-based international order' as though it still functions as advertised," Carney said in Davos. "Call the system what it is: a period where the most powerful pursue their interests using economic integration as a weapon of coercion."

Trump rebuked Carney directly in his own Davos speech, telling the prime minister that he should be more grateful for U.S. contributions to Canada's defense.

"Canada lives because of the United States," Trump said Wednesday. "Remember that, Mark, the next time you make your statements."

Carney's office didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Thursday night.

Earlier Thursday, after his return to Canada, Carney continued his argument that his country must step up at a critical moment.

"In a time of rising populism and ethnic nationalism, Canada can show how diversity can be a strength, not a weakness," the prime minister said in a speech on Thursday, before a meeting with his cabinet in Quebec City.

POKAGON

From page A1

the cost of replacing their mascots, including Saranac Community Schools, Hartford Public Schools, Lansing School District and the Chippewa Hills School District. Locally, Dowagiac and White Pigeon are two of seven Michigan districts that use the nicknames Chiefs or Chieftains.

Many tribes and organizations within the state of Michigan and across the United States have resolutions that condemn and call for ending the use of Native American logos, mascots and nicknames including the Michigan Board of Education, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, United Tribes of Michigan (which comprise the 12 federally recognized tribes in the state), the Michigan Coalition Against Racism in Sports and Media, and the National Congress of American Indians.

Wednesday's statement was the latest response in a decades-long conversation about the continued use of Native American mascots, logos and nicknames in schools and sports. The Dowagiac Union Schools Board of Education hosted a special meeting in February 2025 to listen to a presentation from the Tribal Council of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians of Michigan and Indiana on the subject as well as receive public input from community members.

In August 2023, the Dowagiac Board of Education announced that it was keeping its nickname "Chieftains" and its logo, despite requests from the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians to remove both. In October 2023, the Pokagon Band Tribal Council sent a letter to the Dowagiac Union Schools Board rescinding the joint resolution from 1990, which had involved the creation of a new logo by tribal citizen Ron Mix to better represent a Pokagon Band member and created programs to educate students and the public about the history of the tribe.

The October 2023 letter stated that several organizations, including the Representations Outreach Board, had requested that the school district discontinue the use of the nickname and logo. The Outreach Board felt it was important to nullify the 1990 agreement as it was not being followed. According to the tribe, there were several different logos being used by the school system other than the logo designed by Ron Mix, which was approved in the 1990 agreement as a better representation of a Pokagon Band member.

In March 2021, the Pokagon Band Tribal Council formally adopted a resolution condemning the use of Native American imagery by non-native organizations.

The Tribal Council has shared studies on the damaging effects Native American mascots have on indigenous children, including a resolution by the American Psychological Association, which calls for the end of their use. To date, several school districts in the state of Michigan have retired their Native American logos, mascots and nicknames, following consultation with Native American Tribes.

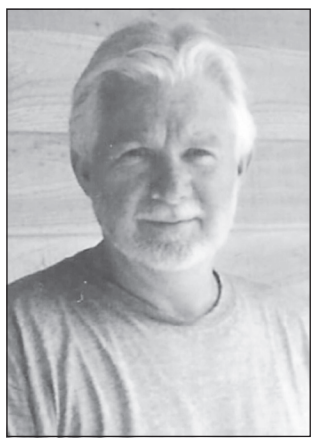
"This is about kids. It's only about kids," said Tribal Council Chairman Matthew Wesaw to the Dowagiac school board during the February 2025 meeting. "I've been involved in a number of these issues around the state and have been invited to participate in a lot of them to give the native perspective on what this does. I know it's going to be difficult to make the change. I know you will take some heat from the voters. I know you may be in a position where you like what you're doing and you don't want to get voted out of office, but one of your main responsibilities is to create the safest, best learning environment for the students that are here. Not just the majority, all students. If you've got one student who's negatively impacted, you need to look at that.

"I know there's been agreements over the years with the tribal councils supporting the logo," Wesaw continued. "Nobody thinks any of this was done to be disrespectful. It was all well-intentioned, but times change and I think research shows that time has changed. So I would just strongly encourage you to put together the process, whatever it may be, to look at coming up with something different."

OBITUARIES

Wesley Clayton

August 24, 1948 – January 6, 2026



Wesley Kenneth Clayton 'Ken,' 77, passed away peacefully on Jan. 6, 2026, in The Woodlands, Texas. Ken was a devoted husband, a loving father, and a steady presence to those who knew him. His life was marked by commitment to family, quiet strength, and enduring faith.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Vicky Clayton; his children Cindy Clayton, Jeff Clayton, Doug Clayton, Marla Mosberg, Magen Crabtree, and Kenneth Adam Clayton. Ken 'Papa' had 16 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren and one on the way. He was deeply proud of his family and leaves behind a legacy of love, guidance, and memories that will be cherished for generations.

A celebration of Ken's life will be held on Jan. 30 at noon, at Huntly Baptist Church. Visitation will take place the same day beginning at 10 a.m. at the church. Burial will follow at Rose Hill Cemetery in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Ken will be remembered for the love he shared, the values he instilled, and the lives he touched along the way.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs, Michigan. www.AllredFuneralHome.com.

Jewell Kelso

August 7, 1931 – January 17, 2026

Jewell Dean Kelso, 94, of Dowagiac, died Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026, surrounded by her loving family.

A graveside service will take place at Riverside Cemetery in Dowagiac, on Monday, Jan. 26 at 11 a.m., with Pastor Stacey Wilder of Calvary Bible Church, Dowagiac.

Donations in Jewell's name may be made to Forest Glen Assisted Living or Corso-Care Hospice. Those wishing to sign Jewell's Memory Book online may do so at www.clarkch.com.

Jewell was born Aug. 7, 1931, in Hoxie, Arkansas, to Charles & Anna (Sammons) Gravitt. Jewell completed her high school education, graduating early as a junior, from Dowagiac Central High School in 1948. Soon thereafter, she married Morris Kelso, on Aug. 29, 1948. Jewell adored raising her three children and after they became adults, she went to college for her nursing degree. She spent over 20 years with Silverbrook Manor Nursing Home in Niles.

In her free time, Jewell enjoyed watching her grandchildren participate in their activities, gardening flowers and vegetables, baking and traveling.

Jewell is survived by her children: Mary Ann (Philip) Kidman, Charles A. (Tori) Kelso, and Roger (Barbara) Kelso; six grandchildren: Kimberly (Randy) Robison, Kevin Kidman, Kristina (Doug) Michels, Nicholas (LaTrenda) Kelso, Eric (Dulce) Kelso and Jacob Kelso; seven great-grandchildren; and three great-great-grandchildren.

Jewell was preceded in death by her husband; infant son – Gregory Kelso; parents; and siblings – William Gravitt, Karen Przybylinski, and Charlene Tonkin.

Albert Leak

April 4, 1940 – January 17, 2026

Albert "Sonny" Edward Leak, 85, of Cassopolis, died peacefully, Jan. 17, 2026, in the comfort of his family's presence.

His life began April 4, 1940, in Goshen, Indiana, the first of three born to Levi and Wanetta Leak.

Albert worked for Forest Fiberglass making RVs. Using those skills he would build campers for the back of his truck. He also loved driving in the demolition derby both in Cassopolis and New Paris. Albert loved being outside. He spent many hours hunting and fishing. He especially enjoyed salmon fishing and camping up north with his family and friends. His children have special memories of him playing guitar and singing with them.

Albert will be greatly missed by his family and friends. He is survived by two daughters, Debra Watts of Cassopolis, and Linda Leak of Goshen; one son, David (Vicky) Leak of Goshen; eight grandchildren, Melissa Watts of Cassopolis, Michael Higgins of Cassopolis, Christina (Branden) Higgins Smith of Cassopolis, James Leak of Goshen, Stephanie Smith of Constantine, Candy Ann (Bobby) Heath of Sturgis, Avery (Mikayla) Rickey of Illinois, Mickayla Sage of Vandalia; many great grandchildren; two great-great grand-children, Arabella Brumbelow, Ashton Jerraid and a host of nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; former wife and long-time friend, Mary Lou Leak, and his sister, Mary Jane Hughes.

Family and friends will gather Tuesday, Jan. 27 at 10 a.m. in Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis until the time of his service at 11 a.m. Albert will be laid to rest in Edwardsburg Cemetery.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Share a memory or a message online at wagnercares.com.

Death notices

Ronald Emerson Deyarmon, 70, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Jan. 14, 2026. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Phillip Alan Sutton, 79, of Buchanan, Michigan, passed away on Jan. 15, 2026, in Stevensville, MI. Services will be held at 11 a.m., on Jan. 21, at Brown Funeral Home.

John Zablocki, 76, of Niles, passed away on Jan. 16, 2026. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

Paul Peterson, Sr., 76, of Niles, passed away on Jan. 16, 2026. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

Thomas Edward Shultz, 61, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Jan. 18, 2026. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Kari Lynn Kasprzak, 48, passed away on Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, in Stevensville, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Deanna Mohr, 83, of Niles, passed away at her residence on Monday, Jan. 19, 2026. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

Danny Royce Kauffman, 79, of Eau Claire, Michigan, passed away on Jan. 15, 2026. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Homes.

Koral "Goldie" England, 86, of Berrien Center, MI, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family on Jan. 14, 2026. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs, Michigan. No services planned at this time. www.AllredFuneralHome.com.

Wesley Kenneth Clayton 'Ken', 77, formerly of Niles, Michigan passed away peacefully on Jan. 6, 2026, in The Woodlands, Texas. Services held on Friday, Jan. 30. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs, Michigan. www.AllredFuneralHome.com.

Annette Konadu Addai, of South Bend, IN, passed away on Jan. 4, 2026, in the presence of her family and closest friends. She was 43 years old. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Services to be held on Jan. 30, 31, and February 1. www.AllredFuneralHome.com.

Margaret Warren

May 27, 1935 – January 20, 2026

Margaret Jane Warren, 90, of Vandalia, died peacefully Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026, in the comfort of her family's presence.

Her life began May 27, 1935, in Millersburg, Holmes County, Ohio, the middle of five children born to Roy and Claudia Fites. She married Aaron K. Warren, M.D. on Aug. 18, 1957 in Greensburg, Ohio. After 57 years of marriage, he preceded her in death May 15, 2013.

Margaret was raised in a large farm family in Ohio. She was the first in her family to go to college. She attended Anderson College, which is now Anderson University, in Anderson, Indiana. This is where she met Aaron and they married following her graduation in 1957. She went on to teach first and second grade in both Anderson and Indianapolis for six years. She and Aaron moved to Cassopolis, Michigan in 1964.

She became active in church ministries and community organizations and served for a time as a preschool teacher. She enjoyed traveling with family and friends. She cherished gatherings with family and friends. She loved to laugh as she had a witty sense of humor. She continued to teach and mentor throughout her life in many ways. Margaret will be greatly missed by family and friends.

She is survived by daughters, Diane (Kenneth) Rau of Cassopolis, Debra (Stephen "Derek') Hadfield of Albion; son, Dwaine (Cynthia) Warren of Jones; five grandchildren, Kenneth (Kylie) Rau of White Pigeon, Peter (Emily) Rau of Ashburn, Virginia, Sarah (Timothy) Zimmer of Bristol, Indiana, Samuel (Grace) Warren of Columbus, Ohio, Zane Hadfield of Albion; six great grandchildren, Annaliese, Adeline, Aaron, Leia, Grant, Jack; sister, Ola Neidert of North Canton, Ohio; and a host of nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her beloved husband; her siblings, Carol Hines, David Fites, Ruth Harmon; and granddaughter, Zoe Scout Hadfield. Family and friends will gather Thursday, Jan. 29 from 5:30-8 p.m., in Wagner Family Funerals, 202 North Broadway Street, Cassopolis. Family and friends will gather Friday, Jan. 30 from 1:30 p.m. until time of funeral service at 3:30 p.m. in the First Church of God, 21083 Spencer Road, Cassopolis.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Margaret be made to the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) Missions, care of the First Church of God, 21083 Spencer Road, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Share a memory or a message online at wagnercares.com.

Obituary policy

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For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

Examiner classifies Good's death as homicide

By PAUL WALSH
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

More than two weeks after she was shot and killed by a federal immigration agent, the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office ruled the death of Renee Good a homicide.

The office released the information on Jan. 22 in a form that was posted to its public data portal. The disclosure indicated she was shot multiple times, but offered no further details.

Homicide is defined as a death that occurs at the hands of another person and does not necessarily mean the person died from a criminal act.

When the office released the same form one week after the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd in 2020, it also included this explanation: "Manner of death classification is a statutory function of the medical examiner, as part of death certification for purposes of vital statistics and public health. Manner of death is not a legal determination of culpability or intent, and should not be used to usurp the judicial process. Such decisions are outside the scope of the medical examiner's role or authority. Under Minnesota state law, the medical examiner is a neutral and independent office and is separate and distinct from any prosecutorial authority or law enforcement agency."

Sports stadium deals hand even more taxpayer money to billionaires

By KEVIN HARDY
Stateline.org (TNS)

When Washington, D.C., agreed to hand over billions in land and tax breaks for a new Commanders football stadium, experts thought it would long remain an outlier in sweetheart deals for sports teams.

But just months later, attention turned to Kansas, where officials in December announced plans to fund 60 percent of a new stadium for the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs. The state committed to spending up to $1.8 billion – the largest-ever professional sports subsidy.

Geoffrey Propheter, who studies stadium deals as an associate professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of Colorado Denver, thought the Commanders deal would stand out for years to come "for how ludicrous it was."

The D.C. Council in September finalized a plan to dedicate more than $1 billion in public funds to move the Commanders some 7 miles from a suburb in Maryland to a new facility planned for the old RFK Stadium site.

The city's deal, which offers free riverfront land and exclusive development rights, means the district could forgo between $6 billion and $25 billion in revenue over time, Propheter said. By his calculations, that makes the planned Commanders stadium project the most valuable package ever awarded to a sports team. The team is primarily owned by Josh Harris, an investor with a net worth above $11 billion who also owns majority stakes in the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers and the NHL's New Jersey Devils.

The stadium deals in Washington and Kansas – both involving relocations within the same metropolitan area – have set separate records for taxpayer subsidies to sports teams. They serve as further evidence that public officials are uninterested in curbing giveaways to billionaire team owners, despite decades of research suggesting stadiums are a wasteful use of limited tax dollars.

And the deals could further push up the public price tag for projects in Chicago, Denver and Newark, New Jersey, all of which are discussing new or upgraded venues for NFL and NHL teams.

"Kansas lawmakers have done every NFL team and every pro-subsidy lawmaker everywhere else in the country a huge favor, because now teams can look at the Kansas deal and say, 'Hey, what we're asking for is not nearly as bad or as crazy or stupid as what Kansas is offering,'" Propheter said. "So now we've just pushed the expectation upward."

Decades of research has found stadium subsidies are a poor investment of public dollars. Yet the median, inflation-adjusted stadium subsidy amount has ballooned over time.

The Chiefs deal is poised to surpass the $1.48 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars awarded to Montreal's Olympic Stadium, opened in 1976, marking it as the costliest outlay ever in the U.S. and Canada, said J.C. Bradbury, a Kennesaw State University economics professor who researches stadium subsidies.

Adjusted to 2024 dollars, the median stadium subsidy for projects that opened in the 2010s was about $400 million. That increased to $605 million for projects slated to open in the 2020s. Already, 2030s-era projects have reached a median of $825 million, he said.

"There are many different ways we can measure these deals," he said, "but by any metric, the recent Chiefs and Commanders deals are historically high."

The Kansas deal

Kansas officials pushed aggressively to lure the Chiefs some 20 miles from their longtime home at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Missouri.

Officials maintained the new stadium would spur billions of dollars in economic activity despite serious questions from experts and local officials about taxpayers' ability to cover the massive new debt.

"Quite frankly, I believe [it is] the biggest economic win we'll ever have in the state of Kansas," Republican state House Speaker Dan Hawkins said last month.

But officials also acknowledged the pursuit was about more than economics: Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly said landing the NFL team would make Kansas a tourist destination, help retain young people and defy stereotypes of Kansas as a flyover state.

"And what could be cooler than being home to the Kansas City Chiefs?" she said.

Kansas officials, the Chiefs and the Commanders did not respond to Stateline's questions about the deals.

The Chiefs are owned by the Hunt family of Texas, one of the nation's wealthiest families, estimated by Forbes to be worth nearly $25 billion.

As both the Chiefs and MLB's Kansas City Royals – also in Missouri – openly weighed new stadiums in 2024, lawmakers in Topeka passed legislation amplifying an already lucrative tax incentive program to lure a pro sports team across State Line Road.

To fund Kansas' expected $1.8 billion share of the new Chiefs stadium, state officials will divert sales taxes from a wide swath of the metropolitan area to pay back stadium debt. Officials say that won't cause tax increases, but those tax diversions could cut deep into other city and state spending priorities.

Neil deMause, a journalist who has written extensively about stadium subsidies, said Kansas was effectively "negotiating against itself," since Missouri was not prepared to offer such a lucrative deal. The same situation was true in Washington, he said, as it became clear that Maryland and Virginia, which were also vying for the new stadium, would not offer billions in free land and other benefits.

The new Chiefs stadium will be owned by the state, meaning the team won't be subject to property taxes, a lucrative perk. The Chiefs will pay rent, but those funds will go into an account that can be used for ongoing facility maintenance and security. The state will also contribute millions to that fund every year.

The Chiefs will keep all revenue from ticket sales, parking and concessions, including for nonfootball events such as concerts and Final Four basketball games.

In Missouri, the Chiefs had previously committed $126 million in funding for education, transportation, health care and other community benefits over a 40-year period. But no such arrangement has been announced in Kansas.

In a nonbinding 33-page term sheet released by the state, the team agreed to set aside $3 million per year for a community impact fund. That fund, though, is controlled by the Chiefs, who can spend it on charitable endeavors or on profit-generating, team-branded ventures like fitness clubs.

The Chiefs also agreed to match their current charitable and volunteer efforts in Missouri, but neither the team nor Kansas officials answered questions on how that provision would be calculated or enforced.

Kansas will receive some access to its stadium for events including graduation ceremonies and free concerts, but those are subject to team-determined availability, and the state must cover all costs.

State officials are guaranteed one stadium suite for most events. But the term sheet notes that state officials must pay for their own food, except for free soda and water.

"They could have at least held out for free jerseys or something," deMause said.

'It's about panic'

The lopsided deal in Kansas will likely boost efforts by other team owners looking to update their facilities, deMause said.

"For whatever reason, we're in a moment where team owners feel entitled to demand a lot more billions of dollars than anybody else has," he said. "And the more they get away with that, the more their fellow owners are going to be emboldened to ask for the same thing."

In Illinois, lawmakers have discussed for years an effort to relocate the NFL's Chicago Bears from Soldier Field to a new site along Lake Michigan in Chicago or in the suburb of Arlington Heights. For decades, the team has been primarily owned by the McCaskey family. Last month, Bears President and CEO Kevin Warren cited a lack of "legislative partnership" in announcing the team would explore a potential stadium in neighboring Indiana.

That news received an icy reception from Illinois lawmakers, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

"I don't believe it's a real threat," said Illinois state Rep. Kam Buckner, a Democrat whose district includes parts of Chicago's South Side. Buckner said lawmakers have been pushing the team to provide a more detailed proposal before approving a package of taxpayer-funded site and infrastructure improvements.

Buckner said lawmakers in Springfield watched the Kansas stadium deal closely, but are determined not to follow a similar route.

"What happened in Kansas is exactly what Illinois should not do," he said. "Kansas is preparing to hand billions of public dollars to one of the wealthiest ownership families in professional sports history – not for schools, not for transit, not for housing, but to subsidize a stadium for a team that's already printing money."

Buckner said his constituents have a long list of legislative priorities – ranging from health care to affordability issues – ahead of professional sports.

A devout Bears fan, Buckner said he won't be drawn into a "hostage negotiation" with the team.

"It's about panic. It's about fear," he said. "It's about this system that we've created, where, if you don't overpay, a billionaire might just take his toys and leave town, and folks are scared of that."

"For whatever reason, we're in a moment where team owners feel entitled to demand a lot more billions of dollars than anybody else has. And the more they get away with that, the more their fellow owners are going to be emboldened to ask for the same thing."
NEIL DEMAUSE
Journalist

Niles man gets jail, probation for assaulting girlfriend

By DEBRA HAIGHT
News Correspondent

CASSOPOLIS — A Niles man who assaulted his girlfriend after she called him for help when she ran out of gas was sentenced to probation and jail Friday, Jan. 16 in sentencings in Cass County Circuit Court at the Law & Courts Building.

Ahren Michael Canfield, 31, of Detroit Road in Niles, pleaded guilty to third offense domestic violence and was sentenced to three years probation, 330 days in jail with credit for 75 days served, completion of anger management and mental health programs, $3,128 in fines and costs and $270 in restitution.

CANFIELD

The incident occurred Sept. 25, 2025 in Howard Township. Police responded to a 911 call from a gas station on M-60 in Howard Township. The victim said she had been struck multiple times by Canfield and was hiding in the gas station. Police witnessed red marks around her head and neck when they arrived.

Cass County Prosecutor Victor Fitz noted this was actually Canfield's fifth conviction for domestic violence. "He has some really troubling history and the current offense is extremely concerning," Fitz said. "He's a ticking time bomb who needs to find a way to defuse."

He called Canfield's behavior "cowardly" and like the "tantrums of a child." He also pointed out that Canfield has attempted to contact the victim over 900 times while he has been in jail despite a no contact order.

Defense attorney Nicholas Hogue agreed that it was a serious domestic violence incident and said he and his client are not trying to minimize what happened. Hogue asked for a sentence that would allow Canfield to get help rather than just "warehousing" him in jail.

"I'm ashamed for the people I've hurt," Canfield said. "I know I'm here for something serious that I did, something I need to be accountable for. I can't do it by myself, I need programs. I know it's time to change and be a man."

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman said that Canfield's domestic violence convictions date back to 2014. While Canfield has done well on probation and supervision, he has continued to commit crimes after his probations have ended.

"You were ordered to have no contact but you made 964 calls to her," the judge said. "You were making calls as late as Jan. 9 when you were in jail for another assault and battery charge from December. You would think when you're pending sentencing, you would be extra careful about what you're doing."

"You're 31 years old, old enough to know how not to treat people," he added. "Is this how you respond if someone calls you for help? When I looked at what happened and the fact you called her 964 times, if she was the love of your life, you wouldn't be beating on her. If you want respect, you have to give her respect."

"This is your second felony domestic violence conviction, it's just time you get your anger in check," the judge said. "Stop assaulting women or next time I send you to prison. I'm not going to just warehouse you, I will put you on probation and give you things to accomplish. If you don't, it's prison. Is that what you want?"

Another Niles resident who drove drunk and fled police and later absconded from bond was sentenced to probation.

Dean Allan Kietzer, 50, of North Fifth Street in Niles, pleaded guilty as a habitual offender to third offense drunk driving, fleeing police and open container of alcohol in a motor vehicle and was sentenced to three years probation in Adult Treatment Court, credit for 61 days served, $2,846 in fines and costs and $290 in restitution.

KIETZER

The incident occurred Oct. 14, 2023 in Pokagon Township. Police observed him crossing the center line of the highway several time and attempted to stop him. He fled for 13 miles at speeds of 70 miles per hour. He then stopped the vehicle and fled on foot.

He also pleaded guilty to absconding from bond and was sentenced to a concurrent three years probation in the Adult Treatment Court, credit for 61 days served and $698 in fines and costs.

That occurred when he failed to appear for trial on the drunk driving and related charges.

Judge Herman noted that Kietzer has 12 felony and 17 misdemeanor convictions and has been to prison five times. He said that Kietzer faces another prison term if he is unsuccessful on this probation.

"You need to consider yourself very fortunate," the judge said. "You're lucky you were given this opportunity. Without it, you would be going to prison today … At your age, you need to look at what you want out of life. You've got more life behind you than you have ahead of you. If you don't seize this opportunity, you won't have much of a life."

Other sentencings

Martha Cramer, 47, of Marcellus, pleaded guilty to

CRAMER

SISK

tampering with an electronic monitoring device and was sentenced to credit for 139 days served and $1,048 in fines and costs. The incident occurred June 24, 2025 in Cassopolis.

Faith Sisk, 24, of Decatur, pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and was sentenced to 18 months probation, credit for 69 days served and $1,888 in fines and costs. The conviction will be kept off her record if she is successful on probation. The incident occurred July 9, 2025 in Wayne Township near Dowagiac.

She also has an outstanding charge in Van Buren County.

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K-12 schools developing policies on AI

When it comes down to it, districts are largely on their own

By JANICE MAK
Assistant Director and Clinical Assistant Professor, Arizona State University (The Conversation)

Getty Images

Yet there is generally a lack of evidence related to how AI will affect learners and teachers, which will take years to become more clear. That lag adds to the challenges in formulating policies.

Generative artificial intelligence technology is rapidly reshaping education in unprecedented ways. With its potential benefits and risks, K-12 schools are actively trying to adapt teaching and learning.

But as schools seek to navigate into the age of generative AI, there's a challenge: Schools are operating in a policy vacuum. While a number of states offer guidance on AI, only a couple of states require local schools to form specific policies, even as teachers, students and school leaders continue to use generative AI in countless new ways. As a policymaker noted in a survey, "You have policy and what's actually happening in the classrooms – those are two very different things."

As part of my lab's research on AI and education policy, I conducted a survey in late 2025 with members of the National Association of State Boards of Education, the only nonprofit dedicated solely to helping state boards advance equity and excellence in public education. The survey of the association's members reflects how education policy is typically formed through dynamic interactions across national, state and local levels, rather than being dictated by a single source.

But even in the absence of hard-and-fast rules and guardrails on how AI can be used in schools, education policymakers identified a number of ethical concerns raised by the technology's spread, including student safety, data privacy and negative impacts on student learning.

They also expressed concerns over industry influence and that schools will later be charged by technology providers for large language model-based tools that are currently free. Others report that administrators in their state are very concerned about deepfakes: "What happens when a student deepfakes my voice and sends it out to cancel school or bomb threat?"

At the same time, policymakers said teaching students to use AI technology to their benefit remains a priority.

Local actions dominate

Although chatbots have been widely available for more than three years, the survey revealed that states are in the early stages of addressing generative AI, with most yet to implement official policies. While many states are providing guidance or tool kits, or are starting to write state-level policies, local decisions dominate the landscape, with each school district primarily responsible for shaping its own plans.

When asked whether their state has implemented any generative AI policies, respondents said there was a high degree of local influence regardless of whether a state issued guidance or not. "We are a 'local control' state, so some school districts have banned (generative AI)," wrote one respondent. "Our (state) department of education has an AI tool kit, but policies are all local," wrote another. One shared that their state has a "basic requirement that districts adopt a local policy about AI."

Like other education policies, generative AI adoption occurs within the existing state education governance structures, with authority and accountability balanced between state and local levels. As with previous waves of technology in K-12 schools, local decision-making plays a critical role.

THE CONVERSATION

Yet there is generally a lack of evidence related to how AI will affect learners and teachers, which will take years to become more clear. That lag adds to the challenges in formulating policies.

States as a lighthouse

However, state policy can provide vital guidance by prioritizing ethics, equity and safety, and by being adaptable to changing needs. A coherent state policy can also answer key questions, such as acceptable student use of AI, and ensure more consistent standards of practice. Without such direction, districts are left to their own devices to identify appropriate, effective uses and construct guardrails.

As it stands, AI usage and policy development are uneven, depending on how well resourced a school is. Data from a RAND-led panel of educators showed that teachers and principals in higher-poverty schools are about half as likely to AI guidance provided. The poorest schools are also less likely to use AI tools.

When asked about foundational generative AI policies in education, policymakers focused on privacy, safety and equity. One respondent, for example, said school districts should have the same access to funding and training, including for administrators.

And rather than having the technology imposed on schools and families, many argued for grounding the discussion in human values and broad participation. As one policymaker noted, "What is the role that families play in all this? This is something that is constantly missing from the conversation and something to uplift. As we know, parents are our kids' first teachers."

Introducing new technology

According to a Feb. 24, 2025, Gallup Poll, 60 percent of teachers report using some AI for their work in a range of ways. Our survey also found there is "shadow use of AI," as one policymaker put it, where employees implement generative AI without explicit school or district IT or security approval.

Some states, such as Indiana, offer schools the opportunity to apply for a one-time competitive grant to fund a pilot of an AI-powered platform of their choosing as long as the product vendors are approved by the state. Grant proposals that focus on supporting students or professional development for educators receive priority.

In other states, schools opt in to pilot tests that are funded by nonprofits. For example, an eighth grade language arts teacher in California participated in a pilot where she used AI-powered tools to generate feedback on her students' writing. "Teaching 150 kids a day and providing meaningful feedback for every student is not possible; I would try anything to lessen grading and give me back my time to spend with kids. This is why I became a teacher: to spend time with the kids." This teacher also noted the tools showed bias when analyzing the work of her students learning English, which gave her the opportunity to discuss algorithmic bias in these tools.

One initiative from the Netherlands offers a different approach than finding ways to implement products developed by technology companies. Instead, schools take the lead with questions or challenges they are facing and turn to industry to develop solutions informed by research.

Core principles

One theme that emerged from survey respondents is the need to emphasize ethical principles in providing guidance on how to use AI technology in teaching and learning. This could begin with ensuring that students and teachers learn about the limitations and opportunities of generative AI, when and how to leverage these tools effectively, critically evaluate its output and ethically disclose its use.

Often, policymakers struggle to know where to begin in formulating policies. Analyzing tensions and decision-making in organizational context – or what my colleagues and I called dilemma analysis in a recent report – is an approach schools, districts and states can take to navigate the myriad of ethical and societal impacts of generative AI.

Despite the confusion around AI and a fragmented policy landscape, policymakers said they recognize it is incumbent upon each school, district and state to engage their communities and families to co-create a path forward.

As one policymaker put it: "Knowing the horse has already left the barn (and that AI use) is already prevalent among students and faculty … (on) AI-human collaboration vs. outright ban, where on the spectrum do you want to be?"

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Local NAACP chapter hosts MLK Community Breakfast

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Dozens of community members braved frigid conditions Monday morning to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during a community fellowship breakfast at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Niles.

Hosted by the NAACP Niles-Buchanan branch and Mt. Calvary, the theme of the event was "Unity in Diversity: Don't Give Up Hope."

"As we gather to honor the enduring Legacy of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., let us recommit ourselves to his vision. A world where Unity strives through our diversity and where every individual dream is valued and respected," said NAACP President Beverly Woodson. "Our theme 'Unity in Diversity' reminds us that our greatest strength is found in coming together and here we are this morning. The snow did stop us, we made it. We only get one chance once a year to celebrate Dr. King's birthday."

The annual event featured emcee Cam Herth, a musical selection, a youth presentation from JaNora Crooms and special presentations to Grace Harvey and Danielle Lucas for their years of service contributions to the community.

Pastor Lonell Hudson of the Greater New Jerusalem of South Bend is the event's keynote speaker.

"The dream is kept alive by movement. I say to you all this moment – don't give up on the dream, don't give up on each other, don't give up what is possible, don't give up what is right," Hudson said. "The dream is not even distant. The dream is waiting for us to pick it up and carry it forward. May we leave this breakfast not just inspired, but ignited. Not just moved, but mobilized. Not just remembering the dream but recommitting ourselves to the dream. Because as long as we keep working, as long as we keep loving, as long as we keep standing together, the dream will never die."

The NAACP Niles chapter began in March 1942 and had been a voice for human equality by addressing local issues through advocacy and communication, as well as sought to educate members and the public on history and current concerns. The chapter was dissolved in 2018 due to low participation before being revived in 2024 as the Niles-Buchanan chapter.

Event organizers believe Dr. King's message is more important now than ever, and hope that the breakfast will inspire and encourage people to continue working towards a more equitable and just society.

Mt. Calvary Pastor Bryant Bacon thanked those in attendance and encouraged everyone to make Dr. King's dream a reality.

"We're grateful today to be here to celebrate the legacy, the memory and the work of who Dr. King was," said Mt. Calvary Pastor Bryant Bacon. "I know what the dream was and it's time to wake up now and go to work to make the dream a fulfillment. Let's not leave this dreaming, let's leave here working to make this thing happen. We've done enough dreaming and it's time to start working now and putting this thing into action.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Pastor Lonell Hudson of the Greater New Jerusalem of South Bend speaks during the annual MLK Breakfast at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church.

NAACP Niles-Buchanan Chapter President Beverly Woodson speaks during the annual MLK Breakfast Monday at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church.

Dozens of community members braved frigid conditions Monday morning to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during a community fellowship breakfast at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Niles.

Cam Herth emcees the annual MLK Breakfast Monday at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Niles.

Mt. Calvary Baptist Church Pastor Bryant Bacon speaks during the annual MLK Breakfast.

See more at leaderpub.com

Frozen festivities

Hunter Ice Festival draws 24,000 to Niles

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Residents reveled in the cold and snow last weekend as the Hunter Ice Festival took over downtown Niles.

Niles Main Street/Downtown Development Authority representatives reported the festival, which saw dozens of expertly carved ice sculptures placed around downtown in addition to other activities, was a success, seeing several thousand visitors over the course of Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Lisa Croteau, director of marketing and administrator for Niles Main Street, said more than 24,000 visitors made it downtown for the festival.

"After the huge snow midweek, the weather stayed on our side this year, and Hunter 2026 proved to be the best Ice Festival we've had in recent years," she said. "Feedback from local businesses has been overwhelmingly positive. It's heartening to see our community come together to enjoy this winter tradition. And with the weather staying cold, the sculptures will be around for a while to enjoy."

The festival celebrates the rich history of the Hunter Ice and Ice Cream Company. Henry and Lemont Hunter owned the first documented commercial ice harvesting industry in Michigan as well as the first industry in Howard Township. Their ice cream and dairy operations were also noted for the purity of their products.

Charles Nelson, owner of On Base Productions, 227 E. Main St., participated in his eighth festival as a downtown storefront owner. His family photo booth has become a festival favorite.

"It's something we truly look forward to every year," he said. "One of the things I'm most proud of is how our photo booth has become a tradition for so many families who make it part of their festival visit each year."

On Base Productions has expanded into the space next door at 225 E. Main Street, where Nelson set up a warming station and handed out several hundred cups of free hot chocolate and coffee during the festival.

"That went really well," he said.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Visitors play ice checkers during the 22nd annual Hunter Ice Festival in Niles.

New library to open next month

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

EDWARDSBURG — Edwardsburg's latest edition is set to open its doors to the public next month.

The new Edwardsburg Branch of the Cass District Library, 26964 Main St., Edwardsburg, will officially open to the public at 1 p.m. Friday, Feb. 27 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The event will include full library service following the ceremony until 5 p.m. and an opportunity to explore the new facility, which will include a community room, makerspace, café, dedicated teen area and private study rooms, all designed with input from the community to enhance library services for everyone.

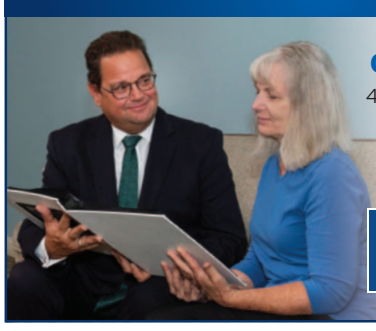
"Thanks to community support, this space has become more than a building – it is a welcoming hub for learning, discovery, and connection," The CDL stated in a Facebook post. "From expanded collections and spacious meeting areas, to programs that will serve learners of all ages, the new building reflects a shared commitment to access and opportunity.

"We would be honored to celebrate this milestone with you at our Grand Opening. We hope you will join us as we turn this exciting new page together."

Photo provided

The new Edwardsburg Branch of the Cass District Library will officially open to the public at 1 p.m. Friday, Feb. 27 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Celebrate a life



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Sports

Niles' Brawley earns 100th career pin
Page B2

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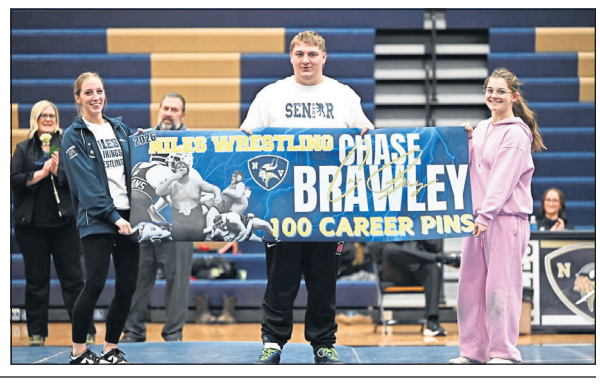

Edwardsburg edges Paw Paw

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg girls basketball team braved the cold and played Paw Paw in a Wolverine Conference clash last night.

The Eddies emerged victorious against the visiting Red Wolves, winning 62-58. Edwardsburg got off to a hot start, taking an 18-8 lead after the first quarter before taking a 30-20 lead into halftime.

The Eddies led 45-32 after three before the Red Wolves made a run in the fourth quarter to push Edwardsburg to the brink but the Eddies used their toughness and grit to get the job done.

Kya Shier had a double-double with 20 points, 10 rebounds, six steals and three assists and Shelby Laubach tallied 20 points, seven rebounds, five steals, and two assists while Mallory Schrock added 18 points, seven rebounds and four steals.

Liyah Worthington finished with two points, four rebounds and one bloc and Shyann Thomas-Flanery had two points, four rebounds and five blocks.

Photo courtesy of Jeff Douglas
The Edwardsburg girls basketball team edged Paw Paw 62-58 on Tuesday.

PMG file photo
Mark Frey guided the Buchanan football team to a 41-27 record and five playoff appearances over seven seasons.

Lakeshore hires Buchanan's Frey as new head football coach

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

BUCHANAN — The Buchanan football program will have a new head coach in 2026, as Lakeshore announced Mark Frey as its new head coach Tuesday.

Frey will look to build on a proud tradition of Lakeshore Football that has compiled 27 playoff appearances, 19 conference championships, 10 district championships, five regional champinonships and five state semi-final appearances.

"It is a privilege to lead a program with such a storied history as Lakeshore High School," Frey said. "Our goal is to honor the legacy of those who came before us while pushing the program and our student-athletes to their maximum potential. We will compete at the highest level, on and off the field, and I cannot wait to get started with our student-athletes."

Before coaching at Buchanan, he served as the head coach for five seasons at Riverdale High School in Ohio. Coach Frey also coached the wide receivers, tight ends, secondary, and kickers at Ohio Northern University from 2013-2014, cornerbacks, kickers and punters at Dordt College from 2012-2013, and cornerbacks, kickers and tight ends at Concord High School in Indiana from 2011-2012.

In seven seasons with Buchanan, Frey guided the Bucks to a 41-27 record, five playoff appearances and three conference championships while attaining a 100 percent graduation rate for players that played four years in the football program. His teams were named academic all-state five times and finished top four in the state once. For his efforts, Frey was voted the MHSFCA Region Coach of the Year in 2020 and 2022 and grew the program from 27 players to over 60 players.

During his tenure, Buchanan beat their archrival Brandywine six out of eight times.

"I feel truly blessed to have served as Head Football Coach at Buchanan High School over the past seven years," Frey said. "I can say that not only did we transform Buchanan Football, but this school transformed my career and for that I will forever be grateful."

During his coaching career, Frey has developed 102 all-conference players, 25 all-region players, seven all-state players, six DI/DII scholarship players, 23 academic all-state players, developed a secondary that finished 10th in the nation in interceptions at Ohio Northern University in 2013 and developed 2nd round NFL draft pick Jason Springs.

"Mark impressed us with his extensive experience and his ability to create a culture focused on preparation, confidence and high character, " said Lakeshore Athletic Director Greg Younger. "We are very excited to welcome him and his family to Lakeshore. He has a proven track record with a vast array of experience that he will bring to our program and will be able to hit the ground running."

Frey thanked the Buchanan community for their support over the past seven years.

"To our past and present players, it has been the joy of a lifetime to coach you," he said. "Thank you for giving everything you have, both on the field and in the classroom. To the coaches who dedicated countless hours to our players and our program, nothing we achieved could have been done without you.

"I am also grateful for the support of our Superintendent, Patricia Robinson; Our Principal, Brian Pruet; our School Board and the entire Buchanan community. To the parents, fans, cheerleaders and band who fill the stadium and make Friday Night Lights a tradition unlike any other thank you. I know this team is set up for another successful year ahead and I look forward to following you all, as I will always have a special place in my heart for the Bucks."

If Indiana can win, anything is possible

By JOHN ROMANO
Tampa Bay Times (TNS)

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — The field was covered in red-and-white confetti, and the Heisman Trophy quarterback was covered in bruises. The college football season had just come down to the very final minute, and a team of perpetual sorrow was dancing toward glory.

This is what it looks like when reality surpasses fantasy.

No. 1 Indiana, emerging from a century of gloom, won the College Football Playoff national championship game, 27-21, against No. 10 Miami on Monday night in what feels like a seismic shift in possibilities for forgotten programs everywhere.

Were they watching Monday night in Starkville, Miss.?

How about in Ames, Iowa? Maybe even in the shadow of a new campus stadium in Tampa?

"We're 16-0 and national champions at Indiana University," head coach Curt Cignetti said. "I know a lot of people thought that was never possible. It's probably one of the greatest sports stories of all time."

The Hoosiers, a team that had not won a conference championship in nearly 60 years and was more than 200 games below .500 before Cignetti arrived in 2024, went 16-0 and won the national championship just two years after going 3-9. If that kind of turnaround is possible in the new world of college football, can any dream be considered too outlandish in the days to come?

Quarterback Fernando Mendoza, who grew up just miles from Hard Rock Stadium and was all but ignored by his beloved University of Miami as a Columbus High senior, played a virtually flawless game despite a fierce pass rush from the Hurricanes.

"Tonight is going to be an insane night," Mendoza said during the onfield trophy presentation. "I can't wait to get back to Bloomington with the guys."

See **ROMANO**, page B1

The Bears' next challenge? Avoiding regression

Brad Biggs

Long, blank stares across players' faces Sunday night in the Chicago Bears locker room at Soldier Field reflected the abrupt ending of the season.

Harrison Mevis' 42-yard field goal in overtime propelled the Los Angeles Rams to a 20-17 victory and the NFC championship game. Fourteen hours later, Bears players were filling oversized cardboard boxes with belongings Monday morning at Halas Hall.

"It hurts because everybody puts a lot into this," said defensive end Daniel Hardy, speaking slowly as he parsed his thoughts. "We all sacrifice so much. And you hate it ending like that. Nobody picked us to be here. Nobody gave us a chance. We just believed. We did it as a group. We stuck together. When the pressure was on, it just made us closer.

"Just knowing it's never going to be the same group of guys ever, that's really the tough part. I would take this group of guys over anybody if we could run this back. That's the business we're in, and that's why every year counts. Lot of love and appreciation for these guys and these coaches and the way we came in and turned the culture around, turned the team around and helped ignite the city."

That's the cold reality of the NFL. It won't be the same in 2026, even if general manager Ryan Poles works to bring back a portion of the 24 free agents on the roster.

After an 0-2 start, the Bears emerged as one of the league's better stories, winning nine of their next 10 games, many with stunning last-minute rallies. Eventually they did what Poles talked about when he was hired four years ago – they took the NFC North.

Quarterback Caleb Williams made dramatic improvement over the course of the season. Those curious about his ability to settle into Johnson's offense at the start of the season had become believers well before Williams threw it into reverse on fourth-and-4 from the 14-yard line in the final minute of regulation Sunday, retreated more than 25 yards and launched a touchdown pass to tight end Cole Kmet to force overtime.

Williams' ascent – paired with the emergence of an offensive line that paved the way for the league's third-ranked rushing attack and a stable of skill-position talent, including blossoming rookie tight end Colston Loveland – leaves plenty to like, especially when considering what coach Ben Johnson and his staff can accomplish with natural growth in Year 2.

As demanding and exacting as Johnson was while installing the offense last spring, he'll be the same in pushing players to reach the next level in 2026. There's work to be done on defense, but wise coordinator Dennis Allen showed creative vision even in times when he appeared short-handed, including against the Rams. Holding Matthew Stafford, Puka Nacua and the league's top-ranked offense to 17 points in regulation should have been good enough for a victory.

The Bears learned how to win in their first season above .500 since 2018 while also earning their first playoff victory in 15 years. That's a valuable lesson for those who will return – and that those headed elsewhere can take with them.

From 2022 through 2024, the Bears had a combined 15 victories. They had 12 this season, including the wild-card triumph over the Green Bay Packers.

"It was amazing," said defensive end Dominique Robinson, who will be a free agent after arriving in the 2022 draft class.

See **BIGGS**, page B1

NILES' BRAWLEY EARNS 100 CAREER PINS

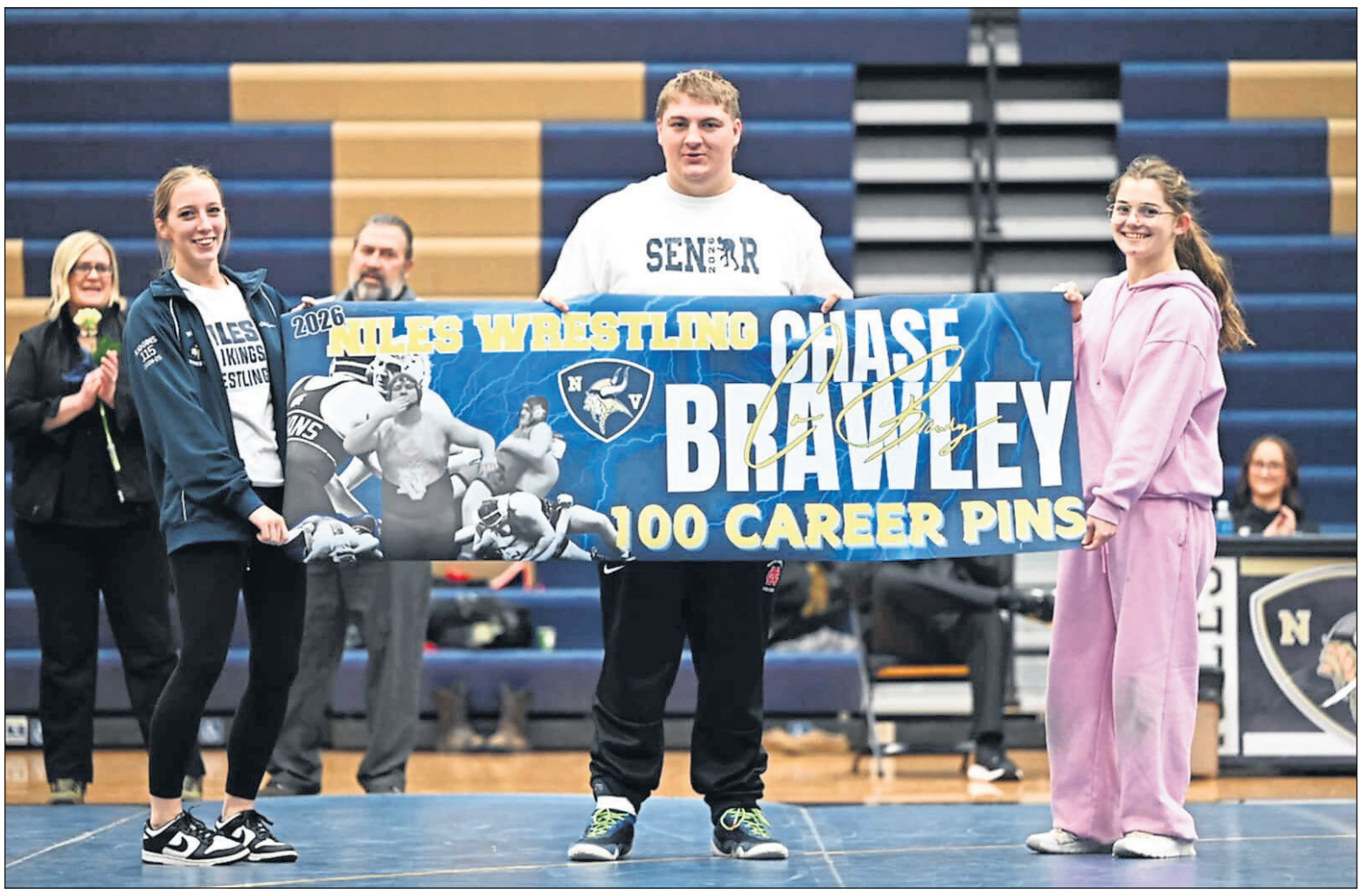

Photo courtesy of Tanya Hagen

Niles senior Chase Brawley was recognized Wednesday for earning 100 career pins this season. Brawley helped the Vikings earn a 54-21 Senior Night win over Edwardsburg.

SMC WOMEN'S WRESTLING PLACES THREE AT ALMA

Photo provided

The Southwestern Michigan College women's wrestling team placed three at the Alma Open Saturday, Jan. 17. Alyse Koss went 1-2 in the 117-pound class and placed second, Aarika Morse was 0-3 in 124, good for sixth, and Gabby Alfaro was 0-2 in 207 for second place. Next up for the team is the Grand Valley Laker Classic on Sunday, Feb. 8.

St. Brown tells Lions fans to let OC hire 'play out'

By NOLAN BIANCHI
The Detroit News (TNS)

Like a lot of Detroit Lions fans who heard the news about their team's new offensive coordinator on Monday, wide receiver Amon-Ra St. Brown must admit he didn't know much about Drew Petzing.

But now that Petzing is on board for at least the 2026 season, St. Brown offered a full vote of confidence for his new play-caller and coordinator, who comes to the Lions after three up-and-down seasons in the same role with the Arizona Cardinals.

St. Brown, a four-time Pro Bowler and three-time All-Pro, said he saw the (largely negative) reaction to Petzing's hiring and urged fans to trust Lions coach Dan Campbell. Most of the blowback stems from a particularly down year for the Cardinals as a whole in 2025, as well as a lack of familiarity among a fanbase hoping to reel in a household name like former Miami Dolphins coach Mike McDaniel.

"I see crazy Lions fans talking crazy, like, 'Oh, why would we do this?' Bro, do you guys have no trust in Dan, in the Lions? You think they would just hire a random dude? Be for real," St. Brown said on his podcast, the "St. Brown Podcast," which he hosts with his brother, Equanimeous.

"You think they don't know what they're doing? They don't do their research? They don't interview? Most of you guys don't know really much about anything, about any ball. And you're tweeting about a coach that was hired that you guys don't like because of X, Y, Z. It's just funny to me to see. Don't get me wrong, I love all Lions fans. But they are so quick to make judgments about who we hired. ... Bro, just relax. Calm down, let the whole thing play out. Let it play out, just relax. That's all I've got to say: Relax, man. Relax."

St. Brown's production might be coordinator-proof – he caught 117 passes for 1,401 yards and 11 touchdowns and was named second-team All-Pro in a lackluster year for the Lions' offense under first-year coordinator John Morton – but his team has a ton at stake in the success of Petzing after going 9-8 and missing the playoffs with a last-place finish in the NFC North.

The team elected to part ways with Morton, who had already had his play-calling duties stripped midseason, at season's end. As the coaching carousel went into full swing, St. Brown said he was getting antsy about the lack of a hire and was texting quarterback Jared Goff about it the morning they landed Petzing.

"I feel great," St. Brown said of the hire. "... I texted Jared, I was like, 'What do you think we're gonna do?' He said he doesn't really know yet, but he mentioned Drew Petzing. I'm like, 'Oh, I never – I don't even know we interviewed him.' Like, that's not someone that was really being talked about. He said he was with the Cardinals, and he said he's good, he's smart. Although they didn't have the best offense, he does a lot of good stuff."

Notre Dame's O'Brien named to U.S. Olympic Bobsled Team

SUBMITTED

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Former Notre Dame track & field athlete Jadin O'Brien has been named to the 2026 U.S. Olympic Bobsled and Skeleton Team for the two-woman bobsled, as announced by Team USA on Monday.

O'Brien is one of six athletes to earn a spot on three teams that will compete in Italy next month, and she will compete as a push athlete in the two-woman bobsled event.

Women's Bobsled Athletes (pilot/push athlete):

- Kaillie Armbruster Humphries / Jasmine Jones
- Kaysha Love / Azaria Hill
- Elana Meyers Taylor / Jadin O'Brien

A native of Pewaukee, Wisconsin, O'Brien is one of the most decorated track & field athletes in Notre Dame program history. She was a three time NCAA Champion in the pentathlon and was twice the NCAA Runner-Up in the heptathlon. A ten-time All-American and two-time Olympic Trials Qualifier in the heptathlon, O'Brien was the 2025 USTFCCCA Indoor and Outdoor Great Lakes Region Field Athlete of the Year. In 2025, she became the fifth four-time indoor champion in ACC history with her fourth-consecutive pentathlon title. She also became the first combined athlete ever to accomplish the feat of being a four-time indoor ACC champion.

It is the first USA Bobsled Team selection for O'Brien, who had earned a spot on the World Cup team for Team USA in September. She was part of a fourth-place finish alongside teammate Elana Meyers Taylor at the International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation World Cup races in December in Sigulda, Latvia.

The 2026 Winter Olympic Games take place in Italy. The bobsled portion of the Olympics will be held at the Cortina Sliding Centre, and the two-woman official training heats begin on February 17.

BIGGS

From page B2

"The culture here in the city. Just that pregame buzz. The national anthem. The experience was just a lot better this year. People were involved. It just felt better.

"It's fun when you're winning. Completely different. You're not stressed out. You're not worried about who's getting released and all this other stuff. People are stressed out when you're losing and the organization is trying to find a way to win.

"All my boys are here. We're having a good time. It was like college again. I'm glad we were able to turn it around and go out a little bit on top. No moral victories. From the three years we had before to this, that's going out on top."

The Bears and New England Patriots – who will play the Broncos in the AFC championship game Sunday in Denver – both went from worst to first this season. Since 2002, when the NFL went to eight four-team divisions, 27 teams have gone from worst to first. Of the previous 25, only eight repeated as a playoff team the following season.

That's the challenge ahead of the Bears – avoiding the grip of regression – as Johnson enters an offseason with the focus squarely on decisions to ensure sustained success.

"This is my first playoff win since 2019 in Tennessee," said free safety Kevin Byard III, an All-Pro this season who also is a pending free agent. "I have been back to the playoffs three other times, but I've been a (No.) 1 seed, got bounced out in the divisional round, then missed the playoffs the next year. Then went to Philly, got bounced out of a wild card.

"This is not something that's very easy to do at all, but I have belief in this group, in this team, in this organization. We're all having these talks like, 'Hey, man, we've got to run this back.' But there's no guarantee that it's going to happen again. It's going to definitely be tough to do."

The Bears did ignite the city, as Hardy said, and they restored faith in a franchise that hadn't done a lot to earn it or certainly retain it in the last decade and a half. Poles and Johnson are expected to share their thoughts on the season later this week and perhaps offer hints to the offseason ahead.

As players filtered out with gear to stuff in their vehicles, their heads were high. Exit meetings offered words of encouragement with a few things to work on while they're on their own.

In the hallway stood a small group of veteran scouts. Told they had made a good run, there were affirmative nods.

"Not far enough," one said.

Brad Biggs covers the Chicago Bears for the Chicago Tribune.

ROMANO

From page B2

There was nothing accidental about what Indiana accomplished this season. The record was perfect, and it was absolutely a reflection of the team's play.

The Hoosiers were disciplined (fifth in the nation in penalties per game), they were explosive (second in points per game), they were stingy (second in points allowed per game) and they were smart (first in turnover margin).

They beat defending national champion Ohio State in the Big Ten Championship Game, and then crushed Alabama and Oregon by a combined 94-25 in their first two playoff games. All that stood in Indiana's way was a Miami team that defied projections with upsets of higher-seeded teams in the first two rounds of the playoffs before dispatching Ole Miss in the semifinals.

The Hoosiers controlled the ball and frustrated the Hurricanes in the first half, and then came up with clutch plays on offense and special teams in the second half as Miami staged a furious comeback.

And, in the end, Indiana's fearlessness was the difference.

After Miami had cut the lead to 17-14, the Hoosiers answered with a touchdown drive for the ages. It wasn't that they held the ball for 12 plays or that they traveled 75 yards. It was that Cignetti put faith in his quarterback on a fourth-and-5 instead of punting from the Miami 37, and then again on fourth down from the Miami 4. On the first conversion, Mendoza hit Charlie Becker on a 19-yard, back-shoulder completion. That was just the appetizer.

On fourth down from the 4, Indiana initially called the field-goal unit on the field. After a timeout, Cignetti sent the offense back out and Mendoza, on a quarterback draw, bounced off defenders and dove into the end zone for the touchdown.

"They called that play and we knew, 'Hey, we're going to bet on ourselves one more time in the biggest (moment) of the game,' " Mendoza said.

In a way, this is what so many fans wanted. A college football postseason with the suspense of an NCAA basketball tournament.

Alabama, Clemson, Georgia and Ohio State had become as ubiquitous in January as Dick Clark and Times Square. From 2014-22, there was not a single national championship game without at least one of those teams. And six of those games included some variation of two of those programs playing each other.

That's the hierarchy the transfer portal torched. And this is the future that name, image and likeness money has begat.

Miami, on Monday night, was playing in a national title game for the first time in 23 years. The last time Indiana had even a whiff of national title consideration was when the Hoosiers lost, 14-3, to No. 1 USC in the 1968 Rose Bowl and finished No. 4 in the final Associated Press poll.

It's a new era of college football.

It's not perfect, by any means. It's not beloved by traditionalists aghast with players jumping from school to school, and it's practically blasphemous for programs accustomed to sitting atop the mountaintop.

But, as the 2025 season demonstrated, there is something exhilarating about the unknown. Something thrilling about new faces and stories.

Something remarkable about a program that could endure 26 losing seasons in 30 years and, with a new coach on board, emerge to go 27-2 across his first two seasons and win a national championship.

Welcome to the new world order.

John Romano is a columnist for the Tampa Bay Times.

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NOTICE OF DEFAULT AND FORECLOSURE SALE

WHEREAS, on August 4, 2006, a certain Adjustable-Rate Home Equity Conversion Mortgage was executed by Ellie Joe Harris, Jr., as mortgagor, in favor of Financial Freedom Senior Funding Corporation, a subsidiary of Indy Mac Bank, F.S.B., as mortgagee, which was recorded August 14, 2006, at Liber 00942, Page 1019, Cass County Records; and,

WHEREAS the mortgage was insured by the United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (the "Secretary") pursuant to the National Housing Act for the purpose of providing single family housing; and,

WHEREAS the mortgage is now owned by the Secretary, through mesne assignments as documented by an Assignment of Mortgage, dated April 25, 2003, and recorded May 2, 2023, at Liber 1231, Page 2597, Cass County Records; and,

WHEREAS, a default has been made in the covenants and conditions of the Mortgage in that the mortgagor is deceased and the property described below is not the principal residence of at least one surviving Borrower; and

WHEREAS, the entire amount delinquent as of December 3, 2025, is $161,427.51; and

WHEREAS, by virtue of this default, the Secretary has declared the entire amount of the indebtedness secured by the mortgage to be immediately due and payable;

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to powers vested in me by the Single Family Mortgage Foreclosure Act of 1994, 12 U.S.C. § 3751 et seq., by 24 CFR part 27, subpart B, and by the Secretary's designation of me as Foreclosure Commissioner, recorded on September 26, 2016 at Liber 1112, Page 708, Cass County Records, notice is hereby given that on **Wednesday, March 4, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.** local time, the real property located in the Township of Milton, County of Cass, State of Michigan, the below described will be sold at public auction to the highest bidder:

Commencing South 00 degrees 09 minutes 55 seconds East 977 feet from West 1/4 corner; thence North 00 degrees 09 minutes 55 seconds West 258.75 feet; thence South 89 degrees 59 minutes 19 seconds East 280. 75 feet; thence South 00 degrees 09 minutes 55 seconds East 258.75 feet; thence North 89 degrees 59 minutes 19 seconds West 280.75 feet to beginning. Section 9.

Commonly known as: 461 Gumwood Rd.

Tax Parcel No: 14-070-009-017-01

The sale will be held at the Cass County Circuit Courthouse, which is located at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, Michigan.

The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development will bid $166,369.75.

There will be no proration of taxes, rents or other income or liabilities, except that the purchaser will pay, at or before closing, their pro rata share of any real estate taxes that have been paid by the Secretary to the date of the foreclosure sale.

When making their bids, all bidders, except the Secretary, must submit a deposit totaling $16,636.98 [10% of the Secretary's bid] in the form of a certified check or cashier's check, made payable to the Secretary of HUD. A deposit need not accompany each oral bid. If the successful bid is oral, a deposit of $16,636.98 must be presented before the bidding is closed. The deposit is nonrefundable. The remainder of the purchase price must be delivered within 30 days of the sale or at such other time as the Secretary may determine for good cause shown, time being of the essence. This amount, like the bid deposits, must be delivered in the form of a certified or cashier's check. If the Secretary is the high bidder, he/she/they need not pay the bid amount in cash. The successful bidder will pay all conveying fees, all real estate and other taxes that are due on or after the delivery date of the remainder of the payment and all other costs associated with the transfer of title. At the conclusion of the sale, the deposits of the unsuccessful bidders will be returned to them.

The Secretary may grant an extension of time within which to deliver the remainder of the payment. All extensions will be for 15-day increments for a fee of $500.00, paid in advance. The extension fee shall be in the form of a certified or cashiers check made payable to the Secretary of HUD. If the high bidder closes the sale prior to the expiration of any extension period, the unused portion of the extension fee shall be applied toward the amount due.

If the high bidder is unable to close the sale within the required period, or within any extensions of time granted by the Secretary, the high bidder may be required to forfeit the cash deposit or, at the election of the Foreclosure Commissioner after consultation with the HUD representative, will be liable to HUD for any costs incurred as a result of such failure. The Commissioner may, at the direction of the HUD Representative, offer the Property to the second highest bidder for an amount equal to the highest price offered by that bidder.

There is no right of redemption, or right of possession based upon a right of redemption, in the mortgagor or others subsequent to a foreclosure completed pursuant to the Act. Therefore, the Foreclosure Commissioner will issue a Deed to the purchaser upon receipt of the entire purchase price in accordance with the terms of the sale, as provided herein. HUD does not guarantee that the property will be vacant.

The scheduled foreclosure sale shall be cancelled or adjourned if it is established, by documented written application of the mortgagor to the Foreclosure Commissioner not less than 3 days before the date of sale, or otherwise, that the default or defaults upon which the foreclosure is based did not exist at the time of service of this notice of default and foreclosure sale, or all amounts due under the mortgage agreement are tendered to the Foreclosure Commissioner, in the form of a certified or cashier's check payable to the Secretary of HUD, before public auction of the property is completed.

The mortgage cannot be "reinstated" prior to sale, as the event triggering acceleration was not a default in payments. Payment of the entire outstanding balance of the mortgage debt is required to stop the foreclosure. The "outstanding balance" includes amounts that would be due under the mortgage had not been accelerated, advertising costs, posting costs and postage expenses incurred in giving notice, mileage by the most reasonable road distance for posting notices, reasonable and customary costs incurred for title and lien record searches, the necessary out-of-pocket costs incurred by the Foreclosure Commissioner for recording documents, a commission for the Foreclosure and all other costs incurred in connection with the foreclosure prior to the sale.

Date: January 8, 2026

Heide M. Myszak
Foreclosure Commissioner for the United States
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
31440 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
COUNTY OF OAKLAND) SS.

On this 8th day of January 2026, before me, a Notary Public in and for Oakland County, appeared Heide M. Myszak, Foreclosure Commissioner for the United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, to me personally known and being duly sworn did say that said instrument was signed and did acknowledge the same to be her free act and deed.

Name: Karolyn A. Hanna
Notary Public, Macomb County, Michigan
Acting in Oakland County, Michigan
My Commission Expires: February 5, 2031

Drafted by and when recorded return to:
Donna Clifford-Carter (P52369)
Trott Law, PC
31440 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334 Trott # 526738L01

Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!

Synopsis of the Minutes of the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees
Monday, January 12, 2026

The regular meeting of the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees was called to order at 6:00pm.
Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call
Approval of the Agenda
Public Comment
Public Hearing: Considering adoption of the Parks and Recreation Plan 2026-2030
Approval of Consent Agenda
Commissioner's Report: Commissioner Marchetti
Committee Board Reports: No reports this month
Old Business:
New Business: Zoning Ordinance Approval, Parks and Recreation Plan 2026-2030, Resolution for Charitable Gaming Licenses, Planning Commission Annual Report
Schedule of Township meetings: Township Board meeting will be February 9th, Ambulance Board January Meeting Canceled, Police Board February 12th, Planning Commission Meeting February 4th, Wastewater Board Meeting changed to January 21st
Meeting Adjourned 6:24pm Minutes of Board of Trustee meetings may be found on the Township website: www.ontwatwp.org
Respectfully submitted by Tina VanBelle, Ontwa Township Clerk
Approved for Publication by Supervisor Meryl Christensen

NOTICE OF DEFAULT AND FORECLOSURE SALE WHEREAS on 06/24/2016, a certain Home Equity Conversion Mortgage was executed by Marvin R. Williams and Marianne J. Williams, husband and wife, as mortgagor in favor of Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS"), solely as nominee for lender and lender`s successors and assigns, as mortgagee, and was recorded on 06/30/2016 in Liber 1107, Page 2471 Cass County Records; and WHEREAS, the Mortgage was insured by the United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (the "Secretary") pursuant to the National Housing Act for the purpose of providing single family housing; and WHEREAS, the Mortgage is now owned by the Secretary, through mesne assignments as documented by an Assignment of Mortgage, dated 10/03/2024 and recorded 10/08/2024 in Liber 1251, Page 1903 Cass County Records; and WHEREAS, default has been made in the covenants and conditions of the Mortgage in that Marianne J. Williams, Marvin R. Williams is/are deceased and the property described below is not the principal residence of at least one surviving Borrower; and WHEREAS, the entire amount delinquent as of December 16, 2025 is $111,375.92; and WHEREAS, by virtue of this default, the Secretary has declared the entire amount of the indebtedness secured by the mortgage to be immediately due and payable; NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to powers vested in me by the Single Family Mortgage Foreclosure Act of 1994, 12 U.S.C. 3751 et seq., by 24 CFR part 27, subpart B, and by the Secretary's designation of me as Foreclosure Commissioner, Recorded October 7, 2024 in Liber 1251, Page 1891 Cass County Records, notice is hereby given that on March 16, 2026 at 1:00 PM local time, the real property located in the Village of Cassopolis, County of Cass, State of Michigan, the below described will be sold at public auction to the highest bidder: THE EAST 66.00 FEET OF THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED PARCEL OF LAND: PART OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION 25, TOWN 6 SOUTH, RANGE 15 WEST, VILLAGE OF CASSOPOLIS, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN, DESCRIBED AS: BEGINNING AT A POINT ON THE WEST LINE OF SAID SECTION, WHICH IS SOUTH 692.66 FEET FROM THE WEST QUARTER CORNER OF SAID SECTION; THENCE SOUTH 89 DEGREES 26 MINUTES 10 SECONDS EAST, ALONG THE SOUTH LINE OF GRAHAM STREET AND ITS EXTENSION, 535.68 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF LOT 1 OF THE RECORDED PLAT OF "FAIR GROUND HEIGHTS ADDITION"; THENCE SOUTH 00 DEGREES 01 MINUTES 48 SECONDS WEST, ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID LOT 1, AND ITS EXTENSION, 149.87 FEET; THENCE NORTH 89 DEGREES 18 MINUTES 47 SECONDS WEST, 535.64 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO THE WEST SECTION LINE; THENCE NORTH ALONG SAID WEST SECTION LINE, 148.56 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING. Commonly known as: 484 Graham St, Cassopolis, MI 49031 Tax Parcel No.: 14-041-125-022-80 The sale will be held at the back entrance, ground floor, 120 N. Broadway St., Cassopolis, MI 49031. The United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development will bid $116,454.38. There will be no proration of taxes, rents or other income or liabilities, except that the purchaser will pay, at or before closing, their pro rata share of any real estate taxes that have been paid by the Secretary to the date of the foreclosure sale. When making their bids, all bidders, except the Secretary, must submit a deposit totaling $11,645.44 [10% of the Secretary's bid] in the form of a certified check or cashier's check, made payable to the Secretary of HUD. A deposit need not accompany each oral bid. If the successful bid is oral, a deposit of $11,645.44 must be presented before the bidding is closed. The deposit is nonrefundable. The remainder of the purchase price must be delivered within 30 days of the sale or at such other time as the Secretary may determine for good cause shown, time being of the essence. This amount, like the bid deposits, must be delivered in the form of a certified or cashier's check. If the Secretary is the high bidder he/she/they need not pay the bid amount in case. The successful bidder will pay all conveying fees, all real estate and other taxes that are due on or after the delivery date of the remainder of the payments and all other costs associated with the transfer of title. At the conclusion of the sale, the deposits of the unsuccessful bidders will be returned to them. The Secretary may grant an extension of time within which to deliver the remainder of the payment. All extensions will be for 15-day increments for a fee of $500.00, paid in advance. The extension fee shall be in the form of a certified or cashier's check made payable to the Secretary of HUD. If the high bidder closes the sale prior to the expiration of any extension period, the unused portion of the extension fee shall be applied toward the amount due. If the high bidder is unable to close the sale within the required period, or within any extensions of time granted by the Secretary, the high bidder may be required to forfeit the case deposit or, at the election of the foreclosure commissioner after the consultation with the HUD representative, will be liable to HUD for any costs incurred as a result of such failure. The Commissioner may, at the direction of the HUD representative, offer the property to the second highest bidder for an amount equal to the highest price offered by that bidder. There is no right of redemption, or right of possession based upon a right of redemption, in the mortgagor or others subsequent to a foreclosure completed pursuant to the Act. Therefore, the Foreclosure Commissioner will issue a Deed to the purchaser(s) upon receipt of the entire purchase price in accordance with the terms of the sale as provided herein. HUD does not guarantee that the property will be vacant. The scheduled foreclosure sale shall be cancelled or adjourned if it is established, by documented written application of the mortgagor to the Foreclosure Commissioner not less than 3 days before the date of sale, or otherwise, that the default or defaults upon which the foreclosure is based did not exist at the time of service of this notice of default and foreclosure sale, or all amounts due under the mortgage agreement are tendered to the Foreclosure Commissioner, in the form of a certified or cashier's check payable to the Secretary of HUD, before public auction of the property is completed. Payment of the entire outstanding balance of the mortgage debt is required to the cure the default. The "outstanding balance" includes amounts that would be due under the mortgage agreement if the debt under the mortgage had not been accelerated, advertising costs, posting costs and postage expenses incurred in giving notice, mileage by the most reasonable road distance for posting notices, reasonable and customary costs incurred for title and lien record searches, the necessary out-of-pocket costs incurred by the Foreclosure Commissioner for recorded documents, a commission for the Foreclosure and all other costs incurred in connection with the foreclosure prior to sale. Tender of payment be certified or cashier's check or applicable for cancellation of the foreclosure sale shall be submitted to the address of the Foreclosure Commissioner provided below. Date: 01/07/2026 Neil Sherman Foreclosure Commissioner for the United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development 23938 Research Dr Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 STATE OF MICHIGAN COUNTY OF OAKLAND ss. On this 01/07/2026, before me, a Notary Public in and for said County of Oakland, came Neil Sherman of Schneiderman & Sherman P.C., the Foreclosure Commissioner, known to me to be the individual described in and who executed the above conveyance, and who acknowledged that he/she executed the same to be his/her free act and deed as such. Christina Hedke, Notary Public Wayne County, Michigan My Commission Expires: 06/21/2031 Acting in Oakland County, Michigan Drafted by and when recorded return to: Erica Nichols (P80833) Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 25-003503-1

1582189
(01-17)(01-31)

PUBLICATION NOTICE

In the Matter of the Irving and Marion Eldred Trust Social Security No. xxx-xx-1133

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS;

Your interest in the property of the deceased may be barred or affected by this Notice.

NOTICE: Please take notice that Marion Marie Eldred died on December 22, 2025. At the time of their deaths, there were no assets requiring administration through Court proceedings. All assets were jointly held, had designed succession or were part of the Irving and Marion Eldred Trust. Nancy M. Comfort, Charles F. Hayden, and Judith B. Hayden are the Trustees. The deceased lived at 212 Christiana Drive, Niles, MI 49120.

Creditors of the deceased are notified that all claims against the deceased will be forever barred unless presented to the Trustee or the attorney for the Trust or to both within four (4) months of the date of publication of this Notice. Notice is further given that the Trust assets will then be assigned to persons designated in the Trust.

Dated: January 14, 2026

John R. Colip (P25250)
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269) 695-3849

Nancy Comfort
212 Christiana Drive
Niles, MI 49120
Phone: (269) 449-4172

Charles F. Hayden
Judith B. Hayden
9137 SW 70th Loop
Ocala, FL 34481
954-629-4982

ROBERTSON, ANSCHUTZ, SCHNEID, CRANE & PARTNERS, PLLC, MAY BE DEEMED A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION WE OBTAIN WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT 13010 Morris Road, Suite 450, Alpharetta, GA 30004 ph:470-321-7112 Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in CASS County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on February 25, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information: Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): MATTHEW SWISHER. Default has been made in the conditions of a Mortgage made by MATTHEW SWISHER to MORTGAGE ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION SYSTEMS, INC., AS NOMINEE FOR MORTGAGE RESEARCH CENTER, LLC DBA VETERANS UNITED HOME LOANS, original Mortgagee, for a mortgage dated July 27, 2023, and recorded on August 08, 2023 in Liber 1235 Page 2027 in the Register of Deeds in and for Cass County. Said mortgage was assigned by said Mortgagee to PLANET HOME LENDING, LLC as documented by an assignment of mortgage dated March 12, 2025, and recorded on March 12, 2025, in Liber 1257 Page 1059 in the Register of Deeds in and for Cass County, on which Mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $306,311.64. Under the power of sale contained in said Mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said Mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue, at the place of holding the Circuit Court within CASS County, Michigan on February 25, 2026 at 10:00 AM. Said premises are located in the city of DOWAGIAC in CASS County, Michigan and are described as: LAND SITUATED IN THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, COUNTY OF CASS, CITY OF DOWAGIAC: LOT 224 AND 1 ROD OFF THE SOUTH SIDE OF LOT 225, IN PATRICK HAMILTON'S FOURTH ADDITION TO THE VILLAGE (NOW CITY) OF DOWAGIAC, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN. Property Address: 106 HAMILTON ST. DOWAGIAC MI, 49047 Tax ID No. 14-160-200-492-00 The redemption period shall be Six (6) months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If this property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the Mortgage sale or to the Mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. PLANET HOME LENDING, LLC Mortgagee/Assignee January 24, 2026, ROBERTSON, ANSCHUTZ, SCHNEID, CRANE & PARTNERS, PLLC Attorney for Mortgagee/Assignee 13010 Morris Road, Suite 450 Alpharetta, GA 30004 Telephone: 470-321-7112 Facsimile: 404-393-1425 Service Email: MIFCLTeam@raslg.com (01-24)(02-14)

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on 2/25/2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Names of Mortgagor(s): Jamie Stockton. Original mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Strong Home Mortgage, LLC. Date of mortgage: 8/1/2023. Mortgage recorded on 8/10/2023 as Document No. 205443, in Liber 1235, Page 2286. Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Rocket Mortgage, LLC f/k/a Quicken Loans, LLC. Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: $199,202.63 Mortgaged premises: Situated in Cass County, and described as: LAND SITUATED IN THE TOWNSHIP OF MILTON, COUNTY OF CASS, STATE OF MICHIGAN, IS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: BEGINNING AT THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF LOT NUMBER 15, IRONWOOD HEIGHTS, MILTON TOWNSHIP, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF AS RECORDED IN LIBER 1-H OF PLATS, PAGE 391; THENCE NORTH 88 DEGREES 57 MINUTES 00 SECONDS WEST, ALONG THE EXTENSION OF THE SOUTH LINE OF SAID LOT 15, 200.00 FEET; THENCE NORTH PARALLEL WITH THE WEST ONE-EIGHTH LINE OF SAID SECTION, 200.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 88 DEGREES 57 MINUTES 00 SECONDS EAST, 200.00 FEET TO A POINT ON THE WEST LINE OF LOT 14 OF SAID SUBDIVISION; THENCE SOUTH ALONG THE WEST LINE OF SAID LOTS 14 AND 15 OF SAID SUBDIVISION, 200.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING, BEING IN THE SECTION 7, TOWNSHIP 8 SOUTH, RANGE 16 WEST, COUNTY OF CASS, STATE OF MICHIGAN. TOGETHER WITH A NON-EXCLUSIVE EASEMENT BEING MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: TOGETHER WITH THE RIGHT OF INGRESS AND EGRESS TO AND FROM SAID PROPERTY OVER AND ACROSS A 66-FOOT-WIDE PRIVATE ROAD LYING SOUTH OF AND ADJACENT TO THE ABOVE-DESCRIBED PROPERTY AND EXTENDING EASTERLY TO IRONWOOD DRIVE. Commonly known as 33764 Judy Lane, Niles, MI 49120. The redemption period will be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless the property is abandoned or used for agricultural purposes. If the property is determined abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days after the statutory notice, whichever is later. If the property is determined abandoned under MCL 600.3241, the redemption period will be 1 month from the date of such sale. If the property is presumed to be used for agricultural purposes pursuant to MCL 600.3240(16), the redemption period is 1 year from the date of such sale. The redemption period may be extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Date of Notice: 01/24/2026. Codilis & Moody, P.C. 15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 100 Burr Ridge, IL 60527 (313) 536-2500. This law firm is a debt collector. C&M File 23-25-00574 (01-24)(02-14)

0500 MERCHANDISE

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0500 MERCHANDISE

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1420 S. 11th St.
Niles, MI 49120

Tues.-Sat. 10am-6pm

NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00AM on Wednesday February 4, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE SALE –Jason Dooley and Jean Dooley, original mortgagors, granted a Mortgage to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. ("MERS") acting solely as nominee for Top Flite Financial, Inc., dated November 30, 2024, and recorded December 9, 2024 as Liber 1254, Page 219; and assigned to Data Mortgage Inc., DBA Essex Mortgage by document recorded November 25, 2025 in Liber 1269, Page 516, in official records of Cass County Register of Deeds, Michigan, which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of $152,673.58. The following described premises: Located in the Township of Pokagon, Cass County, Michigan: Lot(s) 18 and 19 of RIDENOUR PARK according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber LE of Plats, Page 248 of Cass County Records. Commonly known as: 33320 Ridenour Drive, Dowagiac, MI 49047 Tax Parcel ID: 14-110-200-018-00 The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA 600.3241, in which case the redemption period shall be 1 month, or under MCL 600.3241a 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 600.3241a (b) notice, whichever is later, or extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice ATTENTION PURCHASERS: This sale may be rescinded by the foreclosing mortgagee. In that event, your damages, if any, shall be limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. This notice is from a debt collector. Dated: December 22, 2025, For more information, please call: (513) 852-6066 Daniel A. Cox Wood + Lamping, LLP Attorneys for Servicer 600 Vine Street, Suite 2500, Cincinnati, OH 45202 File 25-11065 (01-03)(01-24)

RESERVE THIS SPACE
TODAY!

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Van Buren COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2025-328-DE

Estate of:
Arthur Eugene Middleton, Deceased
Date of birth: 07/26/1935

TO ALL CREDITORS: *

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Arthur Eugene Middleton, died 11/09/2024. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Robert A. Middleton, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 203 King St., Dowagiac, MI 49047 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date 01/15/2026

Thomas D. Swisher P37931
Attorney name Bar no.
213 Pennsylvania Ave, P.O. Box 115
Address
Dowagiac, MI 49047
City, state, zip
269-783-1609
Telephone

Robert A. Middleton
Personal representative
203 King St.
Address
Dowagiac, MI 49047
City, state, zip
269-259-1977
Telephone

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Cass COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-002-DE

Court address:
60296 M-62,
Cassopolis, MI 49031
Court phone no.
269-4454454

Estate of David John Hansen, deceased
Date of birth: 05/18/1957

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, David John Hansen died 10/31/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Meghan Hansen personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 01/16/2026

Attorney: John R. Colip
Bar no. P25250
12 Longmeadow Village Drive, Suite 100
Niles, MI 49120
269-591-6915

Meghan Hansen
Personal representative(s)
360 E. Tuttle Road, Lot 123
Ionia, MI 48846
269-779-8543

0900 LEGALS

Economy Storage, 2206 Yankee Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday January 31, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.
Unit # Name
9/185 Candy Whitmire
10 Charmin Kelly
12 Jody & Michael Purdy
22 Amber Bedenfield
28 Emalee Anderson
67 Jerome Jankowiak
78 Douglas Demmond
82 Erica Pitone
85 Shelden Walden
94 Joshua Thompson
119 Kyle Tracey
145/467/468 Michael Merritt
148 Gloster Johnson
164 Bradley Hattenback
168 Gene Robertson
183 Cindy Fisher
184/66 Mary Anderson
190/306/533 Linda Nilson
191 Alan Smith
192 Patricia Yoder
223 Derek Baker
228/367 Shawnette Booker
240 Teyshawn Wallace
258 Briana Coon
272 Kurt Shepard
273 Tony Pompey
274 Gregory Montgomery
278 Chelsie Carlyle
284 Kathleen Peterson
342 Terrence Moss
346 DaMonica Williams
379 Bobbie Helms
389 Parnell Jenkins
410/534 Rebecca Coleman
416 Heidi Arbri
424 John Fry
429 Aaron Haynes
430 Seminar Dixon
438 Adrianna Affriso
442 Dawn Hojara
451 Jean Fitch
452 Tyler Mahar
492/676 Malawi Association
515 Danielle Flenar
525 Rick Nobles
530 Justin Landis
541 Nicole Hurt
545 Candy Whitmire
556 Matt Mazingo
557 Michelle Richter
606 Zoltan Kovach
608 Robert Conner
638 Britney Stanczyk
665 Rodney Prescott
678 Kat Domer

Niles U-Stor-It, 1314 E. Main Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday January 31, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.
5 Paul Welling
13 Jody & Michael Purdy
14 Brian Flick
54 Cynthia Swisher
57 Nathan Haynes

J & J Storage, 2220 S. 13th Street and 2627 S. 11th Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday January 31, 2026, at 11:00 a.m.
57 James Colburn
189A Erica Cutter
233A Donna Lawton
242A Angela Stites
125 Kristina Hemminger
165 Sharon Helms
228 Michael Hoadley
238/466 James Diss
250 Robert Clayton/Jessica Vissik
263 Tamara Holmes
292 The Woodshed Crafts
327 Robert Davis
346 Joe Jones
377 Christy Stevens
451 Jacob Pegouskie
476 Michael Gentry
481 Natosha Libertowski
483 Michael Donoho

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice of Initiation of the Section 106 Process-Public Participation in accordance with the FCC's Nationwide Programmatic Agreement. Blue Sky Towers LLC intends to construct a communications facility at Mayflower Rd, Niles, Berrien County, MI 49120, (41 47 13.90, -86 19 26.50) The facility will be a monopole with an overall height of 199'. Blue Sky Towers LLC is publishing this notice in accordance with Federal Communications Commission regulations (47 CFR § 1.1307) for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We respectfully request that parties interested in commenting on this Federal undertaking relative to potential effects on cultural or historic properties or with questions on the proposed facility should contact GSS, Inc., 1054 Texan Trail, Suite 300, Grapevine, TX 76051; Ph. 682-651-0034 within 30 days of the posting of this notice. (GSS #D25211)

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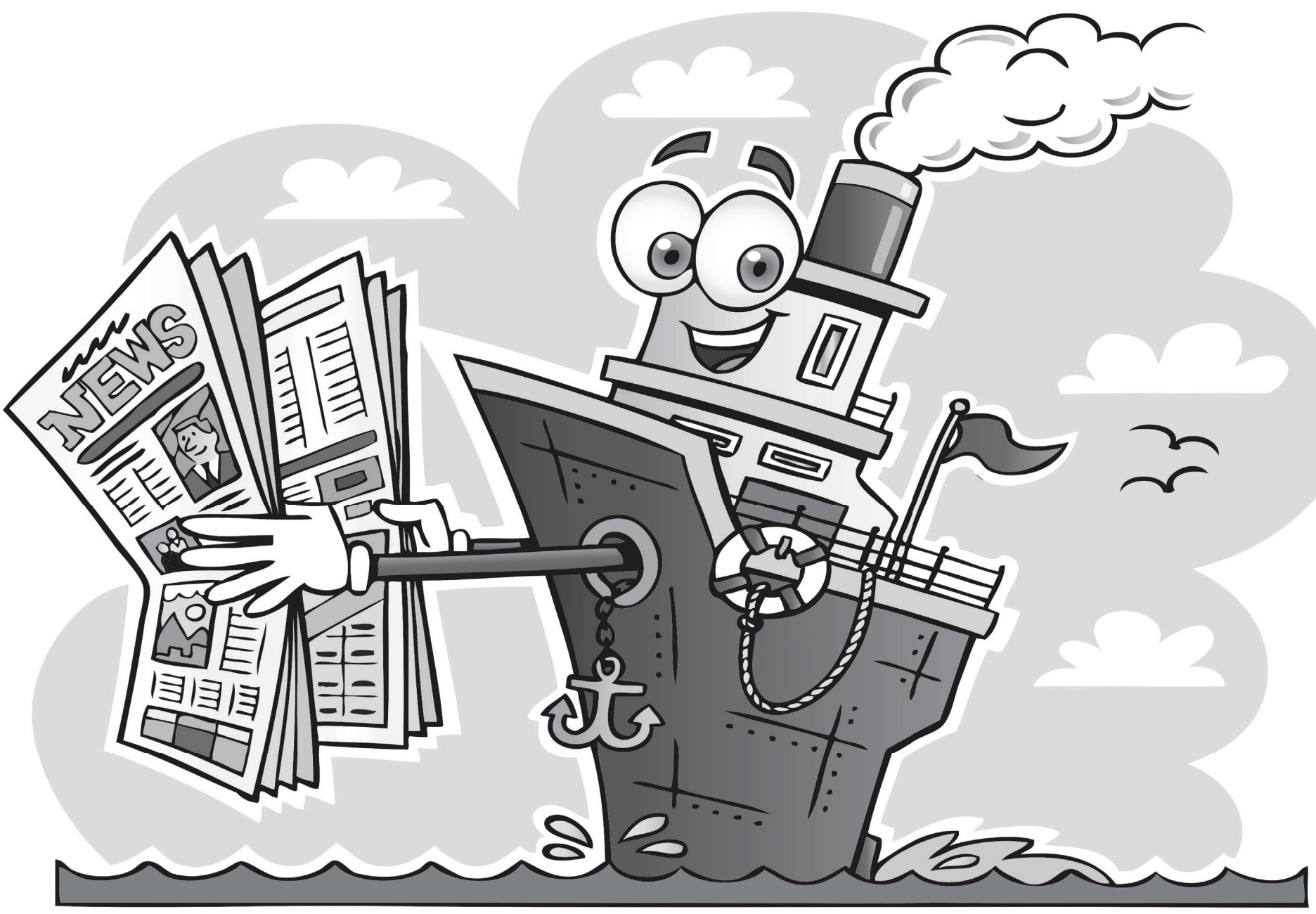

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OUTDOORS

Submitting hunting or fishing photos

Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Michigan DNR photo

A black bear is shown foraging some berries in a summery Michigan scene.

Bear hunters record strong 2025 harvest in Michigan

By ANDY HENION
Michigan DNR

Bear hunters recorded another robust season in Michigan in 2025, harvesting nearly 2,000 animals and bringing home a remarkable number of large bears in the Upper Peninsula.

At the Escanaba-area check stations alone, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources registered an estimated 20 bears above 400 pounds and eight bears above 500 pounds, according to Cody Norton, the DNR's bear, furbearer and small game specialist.

"We saw a phenomenal number of unusually large bears harvested across the Upper Peninsula," said Norton, a Marquette-based wildlife biologist and avid bear hunter. "This is something we've been working toward with our long-term bear management plan – growing the total number of bears and giving hunters more opportunities to harvest large, mature animals."

The strong harvest comes as Michigan celebrates 100 years of regulated bear hunting and demand for bear licenses is at an all-time high. The DNR uses hunting as a primary tool to manage a sustainable black bear population, which sits at about 12,500 statewide.

Hunters in Michigan harvested 1,952 black bears in 2025, according to preliminary numbers from the DNR. That's slightly above the state's five-year average of 1,911 bears harvested per year.

In the U.P. – home to 83 percent of Michigan's bears – hunters harvested 1,522 bears during the September/October hunting season. In the northern Lower Peninsula, hunters harvested 430 bears.

While bears are not weighed at all state-managed check stations, wildlife experts estimate their weight. Norton said the significant number of large bears harvested in the U.P. indicates the presence of more mature animals and a good year for food sources, such as vegetation and berries.

In the eastern U.P., Paulla Schemm harvested her first bear Sept. 16, which weighed more than 200 pounds.

Schemm, a veteran hunter from Flushing, said she and her husband benefited from the DNR's bear hunting clinic in Cadillac. She wants to inspire more people to hunt.

"I'd like to keep the spirit alive – particularly in getting more women and children interested in hunting," said Schemm, who harvested the bear in the Newberry area. "Hunting is a part of conservation. It's important."

'Greatest' experience

Milton Miller, 97, shot a bear this fall near his hunting cabin in the northeastern Lower Peninsula. The nearly 300-pound boar was Miller's first Michigan-harvested bear. He previously killed one in Alberta, Canada.

Miller had applied for a bear hunting license for nine consecutive years in the Red Oak bear management unit, which encompasses his property in Alcona County. He finally drew a tag last year.

"Shooting this bear was probably, of all my hunting experiences, the greatest one," said Miller, a retired bridge inspector from Macomb Township. His story was chronicled in Outdoor Life.

Milton Miller photo

Anne Christman helped her neighbor Milton Miller track and field-dress this bear in Alcona County after he made the hunt alone.

In mid-September, Miller had been hunting with his grandson for several days with no luck. On the afternoon of Sept. 15, his grandson had to work, so Miller headed into the woods alone, driving an ATV a half-mile from his cabin to his blind. He parked and walked the last few hundred yards, settling into the blind about 3 p.m.

Nothing happened all afternoon. But just as Miller was gathering his gear, a bear came out of the woods and headed to the bait in front of his blind. Miller lifted his rifle to shoot, just as a bigger bear appeared.

The first bear ambled by his blind to hit the bait as he waited for the second bear to walk closer. When the bigger bear was about 35 feet away, Miller put the crosshairs of his rifle behind the animal's shoulder and pulled the trigger.

The bear ran back into the woods. There was no visible blood, and Miller thought he may have missed. He texted a friend, Anne Christman, who told him to stay in the blind until she got there. It took Christman an hour to get to Miller, and they began tracking the bear together.

They saw blood in the woods, and after about 40 yards, they found the bear. Together, they field-dressed the animal, then loaded it into Miller's ATV and he drove back to his cabin. Miller covered the bear in ice and finally got to bed around 2 a.m.

When contacted in early December about his harvest, Miller, a widower, was thawing a steak from the boar for dinner. The Army veteran has outlived two hunting partners but said his passion for hunting remains.

"I still love to hunt," he said.

Record applications

Michigan's popular bear hunt is based on a preference point system that rewards persistence. Hunters earn one point for each year they apply and are unsuccessful at drawing a license. Those with the most accumulated points are selected annually to fill quotas in each of the 10 bear management units.

Licenses generally take longer to get in the Lower Peninsula due to the smaller bear population and high demand.

> **"We saw a phenomenal number of unusually large bears harvested across the Upper Peninsula."**
>
> **CODY NORTON**
> Marquette wildlife biologist

The DNR sets a desired bear harvest to establish license quotas and manage the bear population. License quotas are calculated using the average hunter success rate over the previous few years for each management unit and hunt period. Statewide, the hunter success rate is hovering around 40 percent.

Norton said the desired harvest has hit the mark pretty closely over the past few years, falling within about 15 percent of the goal. An increasing bear population in the U.P. has resulted in harvest above goal, while a more stabilized bear population in the Lower Peninsula has seen harvest very consistent with goals. The next adjustments will be made for the cycle of bear hunting regulations covering 2027-2028.

Hunters can apply for either a bear hunting license or a preference point toward a future hunt. In 2025, nearly 73,000 hunters applied for either a license or a preference point – the most ever recorded since Michigan started regulating bear hunting in 1925.

Using the whole bear

In Michigan, bear hunters can use bait or dogs. Norton has harvested two bears using bait in the past. This year, for the first time, he harvested a bear using his dog, a bluetick coonhound named, simply, B.

Norton and a group of fellow hunters tracked the 150-pound boar through the woods near Channing in Dickinson County in the central Upper Peninsula. B and several other hounds were able to tree the bear, and Norton made a successful rifle shot for his third harvest.

"I skinned and butchered the bear myself the day I harvested it," Norton said. "We ate the heart and tenderloins that night. For cuts of meat, I cut backstraps, steaks and roasts and then froze the rest to grind it up."

Several years ago, Michigan passed a law that edible bear meat must be used, which most hunters already do, Norton noted. He said the change makes it clear to the public that harvested bears are being consumed and that the resource is not being wasted.

"I like bear meat more than venison," Norton said. "The meat is richer and fattier, and the fat is not waxy like deer tallow. It also tastes sweeter to me. The only caveat is that it needs to be cooked well-done – to at least 160 degrees – in order to kill any potential trichinella parasites."

Norton cubed the bear fat and will render it into grease. He uses the grease as cooking oil for meat and vegetables, bakes with it and even uses it to condition his boots.

"This winter, I'll also be fleshing, stretching and drying the bear hide before sending it to a tannery," Norton said. "It will probably end up living on the back of the couch as a way to remember the hunt."

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. For ages 10 and older.

Winter Bird Outing: 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Feb. 7. Join us for a winter bird outing to where the birds are — it could be Allegan State Game Area for eagle watching or to Muskegon for a variety of birds. Plan to make a day of it. Bring money for lunch which will be at a restaurant near the birding site. Dress for the weather. Call (269) 927-4832 to register. Members $15, non-members $18.

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

Michigan approves electronic kill tags for hunters, so how will they work?

By LAURA HERBERG
Bridge Michigan

Starting March 1, Michigan hunters will no longer need to display paper kill tags on certain animals.

Instead, they'll be able to validate kills using the Hunt Fish mobile app.

The change comes after the Natural Resources Commission on Wednesday approved the optional use of electronic kill tags for deer, bobcat, bear, fisher, marten and otter.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has been piloting digital kill tags for turkey hunters since fall 2024, but otherwise hunters have needed to use a physical kill tag, which can be picked up at a license agent or received through the mail.

Having a digital tag option is expected to save the department money by reducing printing and distribution costs. It may also make things more convenient for hunters by allowing them to buy a tag online in the days leading up to a hunt and by making it easier to keep track of their tag once purchased.

According to the DNR, 27,475 hunters lost their paper licenses and had to purchase another in 2024.

How will this actually work? Read on for questions and answers.

How will I be able to purchase an electronic kill tag?

Once you download the Hunt Fish app on your smartphone, you will be able to purchase a tag inside the app.

How will the electronic kill tag actually work?

Once you make a kill, you will open your app and validate the kill by answering a few questions. If you do not have cell service or are unable to connect to WiFi, you can still fill out the information on your phone. Once you get cell service or connect to WiFi, the data will be uploaded.

How will conservation officers know that my hunt was legal?

If a conservation officer requests to see your kill tag and you purchased it electronically, you can open the Hunt Fish app to show them the tag. If you have not had cell service or WiFi since the kill, you can still show them the validated kill tag you entered on your phone.

What happens if my phone is dead?

If your phone dies, a conservation officer can run your ID to find out if you purchased a tag and what kind of tag it was. If your tag was validated and uploaded via cell service or WiFi before your phone died, the conservation officer will be able to see that.

What if I'm not with the carcass?

You may not always be right there with the body of the animal you hunted to present an electronic tag. For example, you may leave it at a buck pole or have a friend drive it for you.

In instances like those, you will need to make a tag out of durable material with the hunting license number written on it in permanent ink and attach it to the carcass.

There are, however, some exceptions:

1. If the head is no longer attached to the carcass, then the durable tag only needs to be with the head.
2. If the animal's remains are stored at your primary residence, you won't need to worry about having a physical tag for it.
3. If the carcass or head is accepted and recorded by a commercial processor or taxidermist, a physical tag no longer needs to be attached to it.

What happens if I get my deer tested?

In Michigan, deer may be tested for diseases like bovine tuberculosis or chronic wasting disease, especially in counties where the disease is being actively surveilled.

If you take your deer head or carcass to a disease sample submission site for testing and you have an electronic tag, your phone will have the same information that you would have on a paper tag. The station can use that information to process your dropoff. The facility will then tag your deer head or any sample you drop off so that it can be properly tracked during the testing process.

What other states have electronic kill tags or something similar?

According to the DNR, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin also use apps and digital tags.

Can I still use a paper kill tag?

Yes. Electronic kill tags will be optional, not mandatory. You can still purchase a physical kill tag and pick it up at a license agent or get it through the mail.

This story was originally published by Bridge Michigan and distributed through a partnership with The Associated Press.

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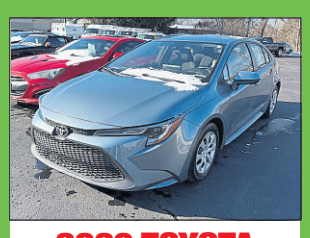

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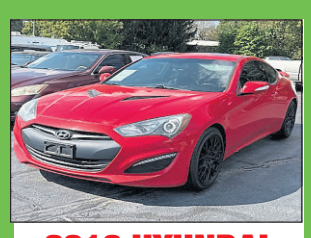

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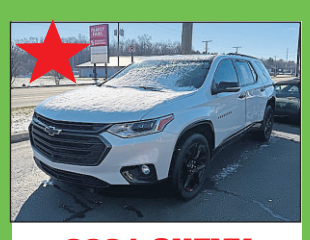

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